

DARK SOULS III PLAYTESTED INSIDE

XBOX ONE

**TOMB RAIDER
LEADS THE
ASSAULT**

**DEUS EX:
BETTER ON
XBOX ONE**

**HOW GEARS 4
WILL STORM 2016**

TAKES CONTROL

**PS4 IS RUNNING SCARED
AS MICROSOFT SHAPES UP
FOR ITS BEST YEAR EVER**

**EXPLORING
FAR CRY'S PRIMAL
PLAYGROUND**

**+ BATTLEBORN FABLE
LEGENDS UNRAVEL
FINAL FANTASY XV
QUANTUM BREAK FALLOUT 4
SCALEBOUND CALL OF DUTY**

ip
IMAGINE
PUBLISHING

DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 131

RAZER
WILDCAT



DESIGNED FOR ESPORTS

Experience true console gaming supremacy the way the pros do, with the **Razer Wildcat for Xbox One™ Gaming Controller**.

Made for tournament play and developed with feedback from the world's best eSports athletes, this ultimate gaming controller packs four additional Multi-Function Buttons over the ordinary controller layout for unparalleled customizability. Whether you want to create dedicated button layout profiles for each of your games or tweak your audio settings on the fly, the Razer Wildcat gives you absolute control without any distractions.

PRE-ORDER NOW:

GAME lime
Pro gamers favourite fruit

eu.razerzone.com

Copyright © 2015 Razer Inc. All rights reserved. Actual product may differ from pictures. Information correct at time of printing. Microsoft, Kinect, Xbox, Xbox 360, and Xbox One are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies. All other trademarks, if any, are property of their respective owners.

Designed for



Welcome to **XONE**



Do you remember the first time you took hold of an Xbox 360 controller? My first experience was when my flatmate brought back his new 360 and we sat down to bask in the glory of HD gaming. When I picked up the controller, and it nestled into my hand like it had been moulded to my very palm, I knew I was an Xbox guy. It's weird that such a small thing can decide which console someone buys, but Microsoft just makes damn good controllers. The Xbox One's controller is just as brilliant, but to say I'm excited to get my Elite controller is like saying the desert is 'a bit dusty'.

But I have some sad news – you won't be able to hear our hands-on impressions of the new controller next month, because this will be the final issue of **X-ONE**. It's been a pleasure to work on such an awesome magazine, with such a great team, and I'm sad to wave goodbye.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, because hopefully you'll agree that this final issue is one of the best we've ever had, packed with awesome content. We've got a frankly ridiculous reviews section, featuring *Fallout*, *Tomb Raider*, *COD*, *Assassin's Creed* and *Need For Speed*, plus a whole load of other huge games. Add to that the *Dark Souls III* hands-on, the first details of a new *Far Cry* and an extensive *Deus Ex* feature and you'll see why I'm so proud to end our run on a massive high. Thank you – all of you – for picking up **X-ONE**, whether this was your first issue or your 131st. We've had one hell of a ride over the last few years. Enjoy the mag.

Stephen Ashby

Stephen Ashby
DEPUTY EDITOR

stephen.ashby@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Twitter: @Stephen_Ashby
Gamertag: Seryph01



Inside this issue

48 FAR CRY PRIMAL

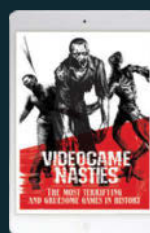
X-ONE goes prehistoric with the next *Far Cry* adventure. The big question is: can we tame a sabre tooth tiger and make it attack a mammoth?



READ X-ONE ON TABLETS
You can read issues of **X-ONE**, and the **X360** back catalogue digitally, at a reduced price! Head over to GreatDigitalMags.com for details.



100 GREATEST GAMES OF ALL TIME
A countdown of the 100 best games you could wish to play, spanning every era of gaming, from *Pac-Man* to *Dark Souls*.



VIDEOGAME NASTIES
From jump scares to gore, this edition celebrates the most terrifying and gruesome games ever, including *Resident Evil* and *Alien: Isolation*.

CONTENTS



42 DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

We explore the augmented world of *Deus Ex*...



06 DARK SOULS III

Is this the *Dark Souls* game fans have been waiting for? We go hands-on to find out just how hardcore it gets



20 BATTLEBORN

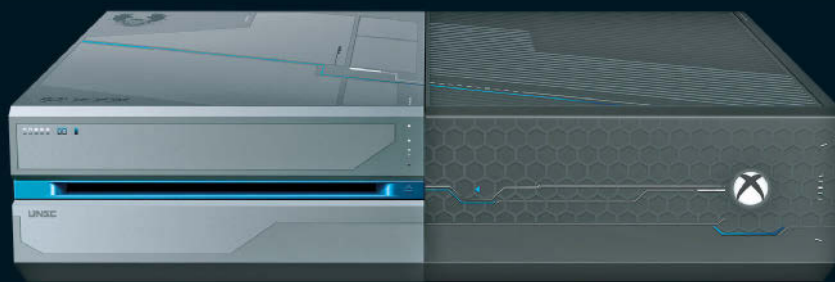
Gearbox is back with a new FPS, and we've gone hands-on with an early build!



NETWORK

14 WHICH GAME SERIES HAS THE BEST STORY?

18 WE SHARE



48 XBOX ONE TAKES CONTROL

A new user interface, new hardware and the best gaming line-up in years? Find out how Xbox One has 2016 in the bag



60 REVIEW BLOWOUT!

Fallout 4, Tomb Raider and COD lead our massive review section this month



92 MGS V EASTER EGGS

16 things to look out for when you play *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*



54 FAR CRY PRIMAL

First details of Far Cry's primeval return. Is it enough to maintain the franchise?



86 GUIDE TO ELITE DANGEROUS

Everything you need to know to get started now that *Elite Dangerous* has landed

XONE

Never miss an issue of **X-ONE**! Turn to page 58 and subscribe for 50% off!

Visit the **X-ONE** online shop at **imagineshop.co.uk** for back issues, books and merchandise

PREVIEWS

- 20 BATTLEBORN ONE
- 24 FABLE LEGENDS ONE
- 26 QUANTUM BREAK ONE
- 28 FINAL FANTASY XV ONE
- 30 UNRAVEL ONE
- 32 RAINBOW SIX SIEGE ONE
- 34 YOOKA-LAYLEE ONE
- 36 GEARS OF WAR 4 ONE
- 37 SCALEBOUND ONE
- 38 ROUNDUP ONE

REVIEWS

- 60 FALLOUT 4 ONE
- 64 RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER ONE 360
- 68 HALO 5 GUARDIANS ONE
- 70 COD: BLACK OPS III ONE 360
- 72 ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE ONE
- 74 NEED FOR SPEED ONE
- 76 LIFE IS STRANGE ONE
- 78 ELITE: DANGEROUS ONE
- 79 TRANSFORMERS DEVASTATION ONE 360
- 80 GUITAR HERO LIVE ONE 360
- 81 ROCK BAND 4 ONE
- 82 WASTELAND 2.0 ONE
- 84 JUST DANCE 2016 ONE 360
- 85 WWE 2K16 ONE 360

CONNECT

86 BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ELITE DANGEROUS

Taking your first trip into space in *Elite*? You'll need our complete guide to getting started, and top tips on what you should do first

90 REVIEW: METAL GEAR ONLINE

X-ONE jumps into the world of online espionage. Can *MGO* live up to our high expectations from the single-player?

91 Q&A GUITAR HERO LIVE

After the release of *Guitar Hero Live*, we sit down with Freestyle Games' creative director Jamie Jackson to talk rhythm action

92 MGS V EASTER EGGS

Did you know Hideo Kojima is a recruit in *MGS V*? Even if you did, we bet there are a few other easter eggs that you didn't know about in our feature...

94 DLC REVIEW ROUNDUP

An epic *Elder Scrolls Online* expansion leads this month's DLC, with the unmissable *Farming Simulator Gold* also popping in.

96 RECOMMENDED

We count down ten essential indie games that have made their way to Xbox One through the ID@Xbox program

INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST OF DARK SOULS III

Words Josh West



WE SENT JOSH WEST INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST TO GO HANDS-ON WITH DARK SOULS III'S FRESH HELL

I would like to tell you that I had just died in battle facing overwhelming odds, brawling with the scourge of warped figures lining The Wall of Lodoleth. But the reality is far less heroic. After 132 minutes with *Dark Souls III*, I found myself looking upon a daunting dungeon door, concealing an inevitably soul-crushing boss within. As I prepared for conflict, imbuing my sword with Gold Pine Resin, a super-charged Knight ran me through off-camera, his glowing red eyes a haunting reminder that you are never safe in *Dark Souls*. The familiar 'You Have Died' scrawl of shame faded from the screen as I sighed deeply. That was death number nine.

But it's the tenth I want to tell you about. The tenth death caused a controller to be violently thrown at the floor. This came, embarrassingly, as I made a desperate dash back from the Bonfire: dodging flickering dragon fire and rolling past enemies with abandon. What I didn't account for, though, was that while everything else resets upon death in *DSIII*, the lift linking one of the shortcuts doesn't. Number ten: death from over-confidence. Well, that and fall damage. Cue the Bandai Namco rep beside me: "Hah, classic *Dark Souls*." I'm not so sure that's something to be proud of, but perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

You might say I've become something of a villain to the *Dark Souls* apologists. Just because something is critically acclaimed doesn't mean

that it is free of criticism. But luckily for *Dark Souls*, the majority of its player base bang their heads so forcefully against its crushing barrier of entry that Stockholm syndrome eventually sets in. Players respond to the countless deaths, continuous loss of souls, and formation of calloused thumbs with gratitude instead of hostility. I've been diving into these games since *Demon's Souls* back in 2009, and you know what? I just don't get it.

My theory is that this feverish scouring of forum threads – a necessary evil to understand the needlessly obtuse elements that pervade the game experience – has led to a casual elitism developing around the franchise, which is then often misconstrued for having a good time. Either all of its fans are entertaining a shared delusion – or I'm the gaming hipster, too stubborn to accept a new trend of developers cutting out the sweaty hand-holding and letting us run freely through their game worlds. As far as I'm concerned, this is why I've been sent into the depths of *Dark Souls III*; to give a view free of the hype that will form the closer we get to the game's launch in April 2016.

And yet, in spite of my reservations, I'm pretty damn satisfied with what I've discovered. Director Hidetaka Miyazaki, *Souls'* creator, was merely a consultant on *Dark Souls II* while he thrashed out *Bloodborne*, and his influence is noticeable. That isn't to say I'm about to start praising the sun or anything, but the Lords of Cinder know all too well how I spent a solid two hours banging my head against that "classic" *Dark Souls* wall of difficulty. ▶



DARK SOULS III

❖ Invasions are going to be even more brutal than ever before, with those pesky red bastards able to get the jump on you at any time.

❖ As ever, Dark Souls does its best to lure you into rushing into combat situations with its slow, methodical pacing.

CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER WE HAD FOUR TEMPLATE BUILDS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN...



WANDERING KNIGHT

LEFT HAND: Straight Sword
RIGHT HAND: Shield, parrying shield, torch
BELT: Estus flask, Ash Estus Flask

For the purposes of the build, this was something of a standard class for *Dark Souls*, if there is such a thing. Medium armour and a short sword – not to mention a regular shield and one designed for parrying – made this template equipped to deal with anything.



NORTHERN WARRIOR

LEFT HAND: Axe
RIGHT HAND: Shield, parrying shield, torch
BELT: Estus flask, Ash Estus Flask

The Northern Warrior is something of a difficult character to get used to. With a battle axe and parrying shield, it's a build designed for close-range attacks – though a criminal lack of armour makes him quite squishy and prone to taking a beating.



HERALD OF WHITE

LEFT HAND: Mace, Talisman
RIGHT HAND: Shield, parrying shield, torch
BELT: Estus flask, Ash Estus Flask

This character build is supposed to tackle the horrors of *Dark Souls III* with defensive buffs, which basically equals 'extra challenge'. That said, an overhauled Miracle system makes them a little more handy than they were after the nerfing *Dark Souls II* patch.



ACADEMY ASSASSIN

LEFT HAND: Spear
RIGHT HAND: Parrying shield, Sorcerer's staff, Torch
BELT: Estus flask, Ash Estus Flask

From Software has completely redesigned the spell system for *Dark Souls III*, making the Academy Assassin – the primary source of magical monster torment – quite the power house. Difficult but rewarding.

is staggering, but it isn't especially remarkable graphically – but at this point I have resigned myself to the fact that no *Dark Souls* game will be.

The general scale is far improved, with the buildings and rooftops adorning the environment feeling grander than anything that's come before in the series. The smouldering ashen remains of ancient dragons that lay sprawled out across entire buildings act as imposing warning signs of what's to come, while withering undead figures refuse to attack – too concerned with worshipping sacrificial corpses – and shadowy figures stumble on the horizon, the shape of a battle axe just about visible through the fog. With six months until release, there's every chance From Software will improve the washed-out textures to match the rather breathtaking lighting effects and draw distance, but I'm not holding my breath. Thankfully, it was soon after I stopped rubbing my thighs at the medieval architecture that I stumbled upon my first bonfire of the demo – my best friend for the next two hours.

DATE WITH DEATH

It took just four minutes for death to find me. There were plenty of staple *Souls* enemies in the branching castle grounds to acclimatise to the combat. Lightning-fast skeletal dogs struck with ferocity, throwing me off balance – and making me vulnerable to devastating counter attacks – but I survived that first scare. Familiar Hollow enemies flailed wildly with torches, while lumbering knights took their best shots with giant axes and pikes, but I still survived (in a fashion that would have made Gloria Gaynor swell with pride). What took me down a confidence peg was that there was no preparation for an almighty dragon that swooped in out of nowhere and doused everything, including me, in fire. 'If you die in *Dark Souls*, it's your own fault': that's the narrative that's been cultivated around this series, but there's truly very little you can do when a screen-dwarfing beast blindsides and subsequently incinerates you in a corridor. Fair my burnt arse.

I attempted to fight through a different path on the castle, but the doors were locked. Go figure. Back to the dragon path of fiery disaster it is, then. This time I triggered its descent and rolled knowingly away to safety, waiting for it to perch atop a spire before moving forwards. Luckily, the mighty beast's fiery rage eventually came to my advantage as I lured a group of seven enemies into the space, causing them to take the brunt of the burns on my behalf.

Pushing on through haunting courtyards, beckoning towers and dank basements, I began to notice the first subtle alteration to the flow and pace

of *Dark Souls III* compared to its most immediate predecessor. While core movement and combat seems to be faster than ever – for those of you that have ever crossed the generation/console divide, imagine a harmonious blend of *Demon's* ►

FAMILIAR HAUNTS

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE RETURNING DARK SOULS MECHANICS YOU MIGHT REMEMBER

SAVAGE BREAKS

While it wasn't present in the demo, weapon durability will return. Your weapons will still break down, though Miyazaki has been quoted as saying he felt they wore out too quickly in *Dark Souls II*.

BIRD WATCHING

If you were attentive enough in previous *Souls* games, you might have come across a few giant crows. They will return for *Dark Souls III*, letting players trade trash for treasures at the giant nests again.

HARDER, YOU SAY?

It almost goes without saying, but New Game+ will indeed return for the sequel, and it'll work in a similar fashion to *Dark Souls II* – offering new items and changing the placement and location of enemies.

IMPATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Players don't look upon fast travel in *Dark Souls* all too kindly, but it will be coming back, and this time it'll be there from the start – no ridiculous quest items required.

FRIEND OR FOE?

Dark Souls III will implement a similar summoning system to the one found in *Dark Souls II*, and it'll use soul level for matching you against players for Summoning and Invasions. Apparently, no cracked red orbs will be necessary either.

INTO THE DEPTHS

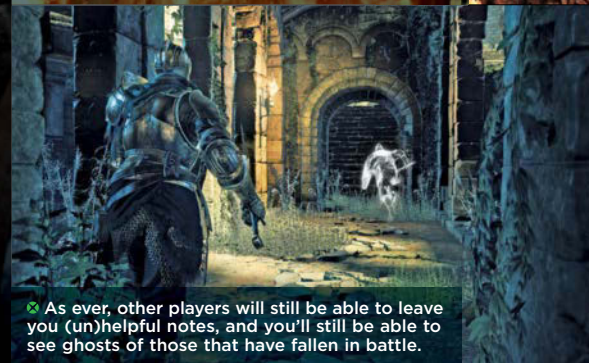
There were four character builds to choose between: an armoured soldier (Wandering Knight), a lightly armoured traveller (Northern Warrior), a spell-caster designed to showcase the overhauled magic system (Academy Assassin) and a fourth designed to showcase Miracles (Herald Of White). Opting for the Wandering Knight with his light armour – for added dexterity, maybe. Who knows? This is *Dark Souls* after all – a variety of shields and long sword seemed like a good fit for the preferred play style that I've clung onto desperately since *Demon's Souls* back in 2009.

I felt prepared, but I wasn't. As soon as my dark hero threw open the doors to The Wall of Lodoeth I was taken aback by the information my eyes were receiving. An enormous castle stretches off into the distance, a towering gothic structure eerily reminiscent to the thematic presence of Anor Londo, blended coolly with the aesthetic design of *Dark Souls'* Undead Burg. The scope

"It took just four minutes for death to find me"



❑ Dragons are going to play an even bigger role in *Dark Souls III*, though there's little explanation as to why their bodies are strewn over the map.



❑ As ever, other players will still be able to leave you (un)helpful notes, and you'll still be able to see ghosts of those that have fallen in battle.



MAGIC CHANGES EXPLAINED

SPELLS AND MIRACLES ARE CHANGING IN DARK SOULS III

Battle arts aren't just for melee weapons, you know. The new skill, which lets you unleash a risky but powerful attack that's limited by a new resource, and also works for Magic users. Spells and miracles also have their own specific battle arts to help you through the struggle.

Academy Assassin - one of the playable templated character builds - was focused on spell damage, and had three magic attacks: Soul Arrow, a spell that fires bolts of energy; Soul Dart, a spell that shoots a lower-damage magical projectile; and Soul Greatsword, a spell that unleashes ghostly slashing damage. These are performed with LB, letting you use magic to fight enemies at range. LT, on the other hand, lets you charge up the magic attack - consuming resource from a blue Battle Arts gauge - and appeared to have 25% boost in power, though as we weren't able to view stats in menu this is an estimate.

Then there's The Herald Of White, another pre-built character that focuses on Miracles, a form of magic in Dark Souls focused on defensive buffs. There were three Miracles: Lightning Spear, an electricity attack; Heal, restorative; and the Sacred Oath that buffs up defensive and offensive abilities for a while. Battle Arts have an impact on Miracles - pressing LT provides the player with different buffs, but the extent of their impact is still unclear. With Lightning Spear equipped, for example, activating the Battle Art seemed to give an extended boost that pumped extra power into attacks for a brief period after activating the Miracle.

That blue bar we mentioned before governs your Battle Art use and can either be refilled at a Bonfire, or on the move with a new item for *Dark Souls III*, the Ash Estus Flask. It looks like you can use a Battle Art around ten times before it needs to be recharged, though it's still being balanced so this could change.



✦ Dual-wielding certainly has its benefits, though you'll need to be confident in your ability. Way too easy to get caught with your pants down.

► *Souls* meets *Bloodborne* - enemies no longer hunt relentlessly in packs, but they are way more dangerous as solo entities.

Knights return and - while they aren't quite as difficult to take on as the Black Knights of *Dark Souls* - they did force me to stop and re-consider my blasé approach to combat. These were the first enemies I noticed to actually employ different tactics; actively swapping stances and attack patterns to take out players that let their attention wane for a second. With backstabbing essentially out of the question, (like hell are enemies going to let you roll around them any more), the fight relied heavily on cautious counter-attacking. I honestly wasn't prepared for one switching between a 'Come at me, bro' stance to slapping its shield on its back, gripping its sword between both hands and charging at me like a rabid lunatic mid-battle. 'You are dead.'

SUBTLE CHANGES

Dark Souls III, for the most part, feels like *Dark Souls II* - and even more like the original *Dark Souls* and *Demon's Souls* that came before it. There's been a lot of talk to it being made more accessible, but the truth is that an inherently unhelpful design masks its simplicity. If you've never played a *Souls* game you

should know that, with no combos to speak of or complicated controls to wrap your head around, the move set is actually quite basic. Keep your shield up and attack when you see an opening - easy, right? The challenge comes from ensuring that you commit everything to memory, don't get bored of playing slowly, and that you check every shadowy corner and doorway. Basically, be prepared for *anything* it might throw your way - no game since *F.E.A.R* has made descending a ladder so unrelentingly terrifying. On the plus side, at least you have more ways to fight back now.



"I rushed towards a group and began to slash wildly at them"





There's a significant new combat feature being introduced in the form of 'battle arts,' which are essentially special moves for each weapon type. I activated it accidentally as I attempted a parry against a hulking, behemoth lightning-spouting sub boss. As it turns out, battle arts change the way parrying is handled. A new shield system has been introduced, meaning only some have the ability to parry now, letting you utilise battle arts for your weapon whilst still holding your one and only defence against slashing enemies.

Still, the new arts technique is classic *Souls*. A seemingly simple new mechanic that is able to significantly alter the flow and nature combat. Wield a sword two-handed and hold down the left trigger, and your character raises it in preparation, entering its own 'Come at me, bro' stance. From this you can perform rush moves that break through shield-blocks, tear away life, and close the distance between you and opponents quickly. The trade-off? It leaves you exposed and shieldless. In an effort to balance its power, From Software has ensured it can only be used a certain number of times before it needs to be recharged at a Bonfire (or with a new form of blue Estus Flask). Long-time players will probably love it, while newbies will likely detest how vulnerable it leaves them.

THE FEAR

I would like to tell you about two of the most horribly disturbing things I discovered in *Dark Souls III*. In one of the more memorable moments of my hands-on session, I rushed towards a group of careless worshippers and began to slash wildly at them. Like every other similar group thus far, ▶



THE PLAYTEST IN NUMBERS

PLAY TIME

132

MINUTES

2

BONFIRES
DISCOVERED

SOULS
RECOVERED

7

TIMES
SUCCESSFULLY

142

KILLS

19

DEATHS

91

ESTUS FLASKS
CONSUMED

CONTROLLER
THROWN TO
FLOOR

3

TIMES

1

BOSS
SLAIN IN 5
ATTEMPTS

WHAT'S CHANGING FOR DARK SOULS III?

FANS WILL WANT TO TAKE NOTE OF THESE ALTERATIONS

CHANGE IT UP

While it looks like the Soul Vessel item won't be returning, there will be a way to reallocate your stat points, letting you change builds without having to roll a new character.

TRIAL BY FIRE

Miyazaki has discussed the possibility of a *Dark Souls* game mixing up the beginning of the game; instead of immediately facing insurmountable odds with a broken weapon, it's likely this adventure will start a little - dare we say it - easier.

DRAGON BORN

While dragon weapons will be back, they won't be hidden in ingenious places. Basically, don't expect to find an OP Drake Sword by firing arrows into a tail for ten minutes - that won't be happening again.

DON'T BE A MUGGLE

Magic is being completely overhauled for the sequel, giving ranged players more potency with spells. See boxout Magic Changes Explained to the left for more details on the new way to do battle in the darkness.

BACK IN THE FIGHT

Like the original *Dark Souls*, enemies will now respawn constantly upon your death or a Bonfire reset - instead of being limited as in *Dark Souls II* - letting you farm for souls to your heart's content.

JOIN THE COVENANT

Covenants will be coming back, though they won't be so needlessly obtuse, apparently. They will still be multiplayer-based but are being simplified so more players experiment with them.

DARK SOULS III



SUMMONING

To summon a player, you must use an Ember to obtain the power of the Lord Of Cinder. This lets you become a multiplayer host, giving you Max HP boost of 1.4x and lets you summon other players.

COMPETITIVE

Using a Red Eye Orb will let you invade other player's worlds, which is the meanest thing you can do in life. There's nothing more terrifying than seeing a red ethereal mist charging you.

COOPERATIVE

Using a White Sign Soapstone, you'll be able to play with up to three other players cooperatively. This can make extra short work of tough bosses, difficult sections and impossible invasions.

► they refused to attack back - except, this time, for one hiding in the middle of the pack. Once hit, this particular enemy began to leak black fog, before, out of nowhere, a giant, almost worm-like, *Resident Evil*-style tentacle burst out of his neck. It made me leap out of my seat. In fact, consulting my notes, my exact reaction to the jump scare was: "Holy shit, what is *THAT* thing... oh crap, oh crap," before proceeding to throw every firebomb I was carrying in its general direction. It died, granting a Divine Blessing. Bully for me. It's made me question just what these undead citizens are worshipping - Miyazaki has inferred time and time again that *Dark Souls III* could bring about the end of the *Souls* world - what could they be hoping to summon? Oh no, it's happening, I'm getting drawn into the lore of *Dark Souls*. It's all over.

And then there's the other thing I discovered, that's perhaps even more terrifying than almost shitting myself in public after getting a face full of tentacles. By the two-hour mark I felt ready to take on the boss, the Dancer of the Frigid Valley. Stepping through the fog, I witnessed a beautifully deadly creature emerge from a portal. An unsettling body of smoke and fire, a graceful creature with a penchant for one-hit kills and swinging sword attacks. As we battle, the chapel begins to burn around us. The fight continues, the Dancer begins to 'heat up' pulling out a second fiery sword, unleashing new AOE attacks and pulling off ridiculous spinning assaults that can cut a player down in seconds.

"Oh no, I'm getting drawn into the lore of *Dark Souls*"



On my second attempt, when I killed the Dancer with a quarter of my life remaining, she was halfway through a flame AOE animation, which kept going after she fell. Killing me. Now *that's* classic *Dark Souls*, to me. Bosses tend to hatch their patience-assaulting plans in technically inefficient environments, which tend to get a free ride, the spectacle masking its lack of refinement. Still, I went back for more. Dead. Dead again. On the fifth attempt, I leapt through the spinning blade attacks, rolled around the burning flames, downed Estus Flasks like they were beers at a festival and blocked everything. Roll in, two hits,

get out; learning an attack pattern hasn't been this easy since *Metroid Prime*. Eventually it fell. The screen faded to black, the demo was over, and I was breathing heavily into my hands in relief. I just couldn't stop grinning.

SO, AM I SOLD?

I hate to admit it, but when that boss went down I felt like the god damn king of *Dark Souls*. It was exhilarating, tense throughout and felt like a genuine achievement to best. The PR rep informed me that I'd downed the boss pretty quickly, with fewer deaths, in fact, than many others so far. Does that mean I have a knack for kicking ass, that *Dark Souls* is now easier, or that maybe I've finally got on board with its particular brand of punishment? It's too early to tell.

Maybe I get it now. Misunderstanding the draconian mechanics *is* the punishing challenge; the reliance on poorly-translated mythology

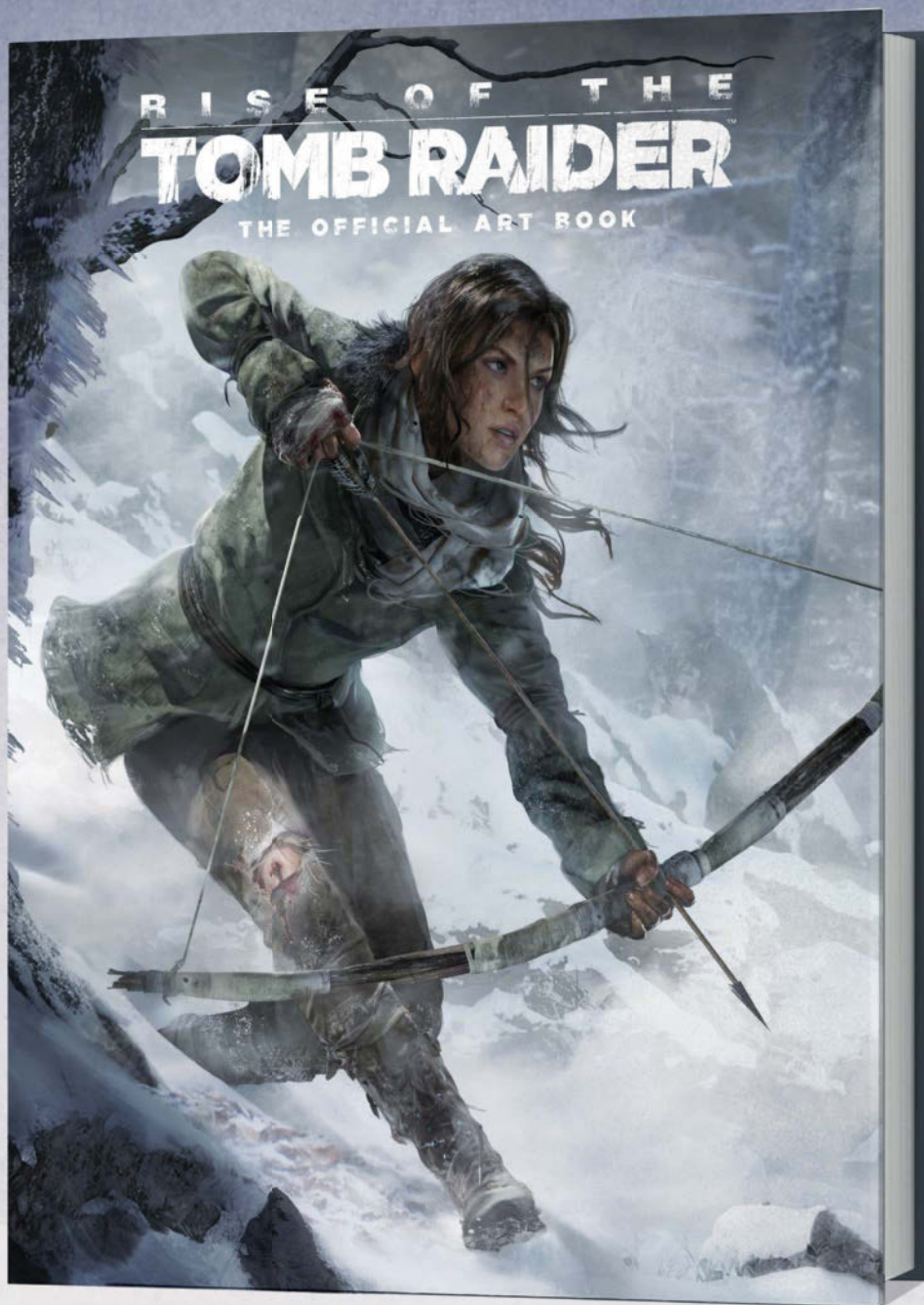
makes the mystery; From Software's lack of game balance is disguised by the notion that you simply aren't good enough; and misinterpreting the basic systems isn't just *part* of the experience, it *is* the experience. That's *Dark Souls*: it's a purposefully miserable experience designed to attract and capitalise on millions of self-loathing narcissists' willingness to persist in the face of adversity.

I did enjoy playing it, though. Improvements to technical and graphical aspects since the Xbox One remake of *Dark Souls II* are welcome, as are the enhancements to AI and speed of combat. It feels like *Dark Souls'* familiar faults are more fine-tuned. I've been diving into the *Souls* series for six years now, and every time I'd ask myself why. This latest iteration, however, seems to be doing something for everyone: blending its obtuse nature with a refined and competent design. *Dark Souls III* is launching in April 2016 and I'm going to play the shit out of it. If that isn't an endorsement that From Software should stick on the box, I don't know what is. ✕



DISCOVER THE LEGEND WITHIN

Featuring concept art, 3D renders, sketches, detailed developer commentary and more!



AVAILABLE IN ALL GOOD BOOKSTORES

RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER available on Xbox One and Xbox 360 on November 10th

TITANBOOKS.COM | TOMBRAIDER.COM

SQUARE ENIX
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER © 2015 Square Enix Ltd. All rights reserved. RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER, TOMB RAIDER, CRYSTAL DYNAMICS, the CRYSTAL DYNAMICS logo, EIDOS, the EIDOS logo and LARA CROFT are registered trademarks or trademarks of Square Enix Ltd. SQUARE ENIX and the SQUARE ENIX logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Square Enix Holdings Co., Ltd.

NETWORK

EXPERT ANALYSIS ON THE FUTURE OF XBOX GAMING

WHICH VIDEOGAME SERIES HAS THE BEST STORY?

Don't think games can tell a good story? Then you should probably give these a play!

Videogames and narrative have something of a strange relationship. While we are (probably) all in agreement that our particular brand of interactive entertainment has the potential to usher in fresh and exciting ways to tell a story, it often falls short of delivering. In lieu of any major emotional resonance from the vast majority of the videogames we play, we receive experiences that demand that we follow the man, press X to pay respects and generally resolve conflict with an array of retina dazzling explosions. **X-ONE** will remember that.

And we do; we do remember these games for a short while. But it's the games that really try, that attempt to comfortably merge great story with great gameplay that stand the test of time. Those we remember forever – even if the execution does leave us wanting from time to time. So we put it to the **X-ONE** readers, what videogame series has the best story? The usual suspects are there, of course: Master Chief's on-going attempts to save the galaxy, Marcus Fenix's apocalyptic bromance, and Clementine's tragic attempt to survive the end of the world.

But there were also a couple of surprise inclusions to the short list. You've got *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* (which Guinness World Records once bizarrely gave an award to for the best ending ever) to *Assassin's Creed*, and the less said about that the better. But when it comes down to it, it's your voices that matter; the **X-ONE** readers, the Twitter warriors, Facebook stalkers and YouTube subscribers. We left it to you and to decide your favourite videogame story and, well, we can't say that we were too surprised by the results. ▶



"Gears Of War. No, really. Not just saying that because it's Xbox. Genuinely."
@DANHOWDLE



"It's all about Halo, isn't it? Master Chief is the king of Xbox, I think I'll have to go back through Master Chief Collection before Halo 5 drops."
PAUL MALLIN



"It has got to be Halo, it's one of the best scifi sagas out there. Better than Star Trek and Battlestar Galactica combined!"
@PHAZON_UK



"Mass Effect. I would have preferred a dancing Ewoks ending, but the whole trilogy was utterly brilliant."
@KOPITE_AL



"The Walking Dead for sure. Love @LifeIsStrange story as well. Twists and turns in the story were/are great in both series."
@CHUNKYLOVER25



"After the disappointing end of MGSV, I'm not sure Metal Gear really deserves to be on this list... that said, MGS3 is one of the best games ever."
SARAH CRAWFORD



"Aside from a pretty awful selection of endings, Mass Effect had an incredible story. Great characters and a really cool setting. BioWare are the masters of narrative in games."
LUKE SEARLE



"I loved The Walking Dead, Clementine is one of the best new videogame characters. I'd protect her until the end of time."
TOM LANCASTER

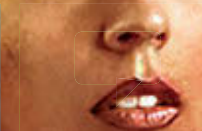
GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED



xb1.co.uk



tube



nag



"Love me some of that Black Ops story, it's so crazy. Can't wait to see what they do with BLOPSIII."

@GADSLEY84



"Call Of Duty had me on the edge of my seat and I was blown away by the ending"

GAMEGUY82



"I'm so sick of Assassin's Creed, that story makes no sense. I wish they would just start over"

FOVLET



"I thought Black Ops was great. It was a mind fuck, but I never picked up on that the guy was imaginary"

TRICHARDGAMING



"Telltale games are just on rail decision making simulators. I remember they used to do good. No longer."

MRBLACKPLAYS



"I couldn't care less about The Witcher's story. I just wanna play GWENT until the end of time."

TOMMYDS

WHICH XBOX TITLE HAS THE BEST STORY?

1.61% GEARS OF WAR

Barely placing on the board comes *Gears Of War*. We honestly thought Marcus Fenix and his bromantic relationship with Dom would have sent this higher up the list, but apparently all you animals care about is the act of ripping apart monsters, not the why. (Don't worry, we feel the same.)

3.23% BATMAN ARKHAM

Bruce Wayne's adventures in Gotham have been great, with Rocksteady proving that it is indeed possible to make a killer superhero game. Running on pure fan service for fuel, the *Arkham* trilogy - and yes, *Origins* as well - combines great storytelling and action.

4.84% METAL GEAR SOLID

We were a little surprised to see this place so low in the poll, but there's also a fairly strong chance that many of you never picked up *Metal Gear Solid: HD Collection*, which is where all of the good stuff happens. If you've just finished up *The Phantom Pain*, we recommend you go back for a history lesson.

6.45% THE WITCHER

In our opinion, Geralt's adventure only really sprung to life with *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt*, but you're all in disagreement. While it can't quite match the prowess of *Halo* or *Mass Effect*, this just goes to show that fantasy still has a place on Xbox.

8.06% CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

Tied with *Assassin's Creed*, in terms of both contentious placing and votes, the two *Black Ops* games have detailed a wild military fiction that you all can't seem to get enough of. Political intrigue, presidential assassinations and weird flashing numbers; it's a story built for Hollywood insanity.

27.42% HALO

Perhaps this was a stupid question for us to even ask. *Of course* Master Chief was going to come out on top. Between the original trilogy, *ODST* and *Reach* spin-offs, and then 343's new Reclaimer saga, Xbox owners have been treated to some great science fiction on a galactically awesome scale.

17.74% MASS EFFECT

Commander Shepard's attempts to save the galaxy from Reaper doom stands as one of the most engaging and complex stories to ever emerge in gaming. Told across three games; players were given the space to craft their own narrative and path through an ever-escalating series of events. Forget the dodgy ending; the *Mass Effect* trilogy is a must-play.

12.91% BIOSHOCK

We've been a little cheeky and included all three *BioShock* games in here, because even though the settings and characters change, the thematic vision doesn't. When it comes to masterfully executed twists, it doesn't get much better than Ken Levine's *BioShock*.

8.06% ASSASSIN'S CREED

This shocked us. *Assassin's Creed* has one of the most convoluted and confusing narratives in all of videogames, yet it's still loved by a huge majority of you. Magical apples, unlikeable lead characters and awesome history-spanning adventures and assassinations keep Ubi's open world high on the list.

9.68% THE WALKING DEAD

It was *The Walking Dead* that let Telltale build a reputation for itself as masters of interactive storytelling. Across two excellent seasons, *TWD* has been a chilling investigation of the breakdown of society, with truly engaging characters.



DOES XBOX'S BEST FPS REALLY HAVE THE BEST NARRATIVE?

It might be a classic franchise, but does that really mean the story rocks?

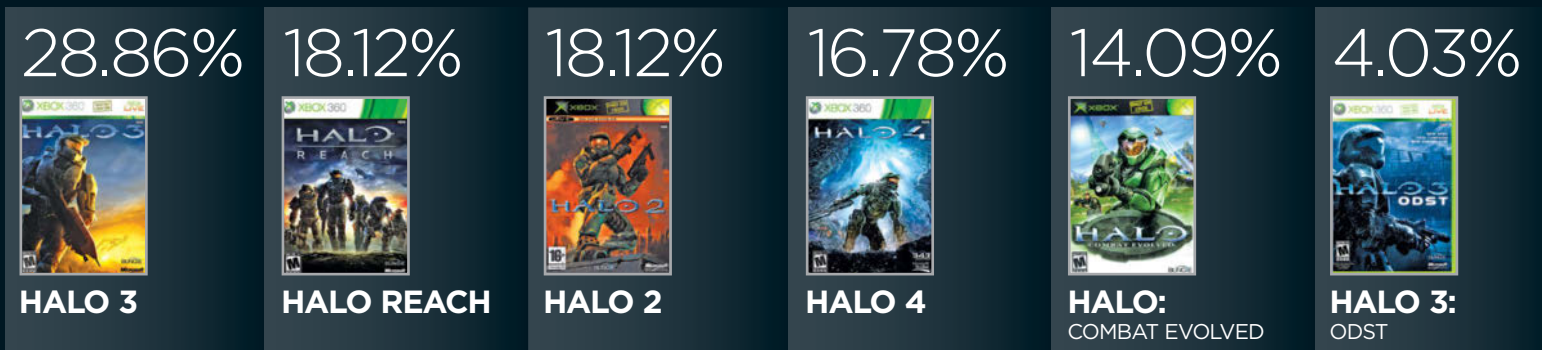
Honestly, the results of these polls had us a little baffled. While it's great to see *Halo Reach* taking its rightful place near the top of the list, what on earth are *ODST* and *Combat Evolved* doing so far below *Halo 2*, of all games? It leads to an interesting question: does *Halo's* story receive too many accolades? Do enough people even care about the story? It's undoubtedly the biggest Xbox exclusive, it's often hailed as redefining FPS games in the last two console generations, while Master Chief and Cortana bickering on a Halo installation has become (arguably) as recognisable as Princess Leia

smooching her brother on the ice planet of Hoth. But does that automatically mean it's good?

Telling a coherent, sweeping science fiction story is difficult - even the most well-written, most expensively produced TV shows can struggle to hold it all together. It's doubly difficult for videogames where, despite having a budget that allows for the impossible to happen, narrative plays second fiddle to gameplay. It's very rare that a game can strike a comfortable balance between both. *Mass Effect* is a great example, though even BioWare's greatest accomplishment ran into problems from time to time, and who can forget *that* ending?

When you break *Halo's* story down, it's all centred around John-117 - a soldier whose childhood was torn away from him, before being enhanced and trained to breaking point, then sent around the universe to kick alien ass and save humanity from certain destruction. There's plenty of extended fiction that fleshes out the story, characters, universe and numerous plot holes, while the games always seem to start and end in a similar fashion: Master Chief wakes up from cryosleep surrounded by conflict, deals with it, and then floats or sleeps his way accidentally into the next one. It isn't exactly *Star Wars*, but, for the time being, it's the best we got.

WHICH HALO GAME HAD THE BEST STORY?



DO YOU AGREE? GET IN TOUCH:


xb1.co.uk


[/XONEmag](https://www.facebook.com/XONEmag)


[youtube/NowGamerTube](https://www.youtube.com/NowGamerTube)


[@XONE_magazine](https://twitter.com/XONE_magazine)


[forum/xb1](https://www.forum.xb1)


[twitch/XONEmag](https://www.twitch.tv/XONEmag)



www.youtube.com/NowGamerTube



STEPHEN ASHBY
GT: Seryph01
Deputy Editor
X-ONE

LIAM WARR
GT: X Eidur X
Designer
Play

PAUL WALKER-EMIG
GT: Ted Breakfast
Senior Staff Writer
Play

JOSH WEST
GT: Origami Kid
Senior Staff Writer
X-ONE

STEVE HOLMES
GT: sdjholmes
Editor
3D Artist

DREW SLEEP
GT: lunaratias
Production Editor
Retro Gamer

LUKE ALBIGES
GT: BadRubberPiggy
Editor
Play

JONATHAN GORDON
GT: Thought Gang
Editor
games™

DOM PEPPIATT
GT: DomPeppiatt
Senior Staff Writer
games™

NowGamer.com

We've moved! The **X-ONE** team has combined forces with **games™**, **Play** and **Retro Gamer** - our awesome sister mags - to make even more top video content for your eyes and/or brain.



UBI'S LATEST OPEN WORLD FLOP?

THE DIVISION
Hands-on verdict with this long awaited action game



IS IT ANY GOOD?

JUST CAUSE 3



TOP 5 TACTICAL TIPS

RAINBOW SIX: SIEGE



HOW TO RULE LIKE A JEDI

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

X-ONE WEBSITE

www.XB1.co.uk

The Xbox knowledge we picked up at XB1.co.uk

1



NEW XBOX ONE EXPERIENCE

The awesome new Xbox One dashboard should be on your console right now, after extensive beta testing from the community. It's a real treat, folks.

2



FORGE MISSES LAUNCH

Halo 5 Guardian's map editor, Forge, wasn't live for launch, but it's coming before the end of December, and it looks worth the wait.

3



DREAMS DO DIE

Don't expect to see a *Mass Effect* trilogy remaster any time soon. The publisher would rather 'push forward', which is cool, but can you go a little faster, please EA?

4



ROCKING IS EXPENSIVE

There are 1,973 *Rock Band* tracks on the store, plenty from the older games, and it'll cost you an estimated \$3,926.27 dollars to get it all.

5



KOJIMA OVERBOARD

Despite rumours of him being on vacation, it looks like Hideo Kojima has left Konami. His non-compete clause is reportedly due to expire in Dec.

» Get your daily fix of Xbox One news, opinion and more at www.XB1.co.uk

BATTLEBORN

A Victorian robot sniper? Yes, please!

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K Games

DEVELOPER
Gearbox
Software

CREDITS
The Handsome
Collection (2015)
Aliens: Colonial
Marines (2013)
Brothers in
Arms: Hell's
Highway (2008)

PLAYERS
1-10

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
May 3, 2016

WEBSITE
www.battleborn.com

TWITTER
@Battleborn



You might have heard otherwise, but *Battleborn* is not a multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game.

It takes elements from the genre, sure – five on five, small maps, concentrated action – but the game's creator, Gearbox, is determined to hammer home the point that *this is not a MOBA*. Even if all everyone talks about when they speak of *Battleborn* are MOBAs and how it's like one. We were able to have a few hours of hands-on time with the non-MOBA *Battleborn*, and we can happily report back that... well, it is a *bit* like a MOBA. But it's also like a traditional online shooter with more than a fair sprinkling of *Borderlands* all over it.

That shouldn't be a surprise, as it's from the same studio as the brilliant RPG/FPS hybrid, but the similarities go deeper than surface level. "If you remember in *Borderlands 2* we had Zero who had some melee ability," creative director Randy Varnell pointed out, "But in a gun game we couldn't go as deep as we wanted. So we had this idea of playing around with melee and mixing melee with ranged and some other type, like magic, and we wanted to go deeper with that. That needed a game that we could kind of experiment with the combat more than we did in *Borderlands*."

This nascent desire to tinker eventually became *Battleborn* and its many different hats. The game features some 25 different characters, each with completely different powers and abilities but all falling into one of three categories: defender, attacker or support. This means you might choose the dwarf-tank, who rushes to the frontlines and thwacks all in his way with his giant axe. Or you might go for the supporting soldier, whose targeting and overshield abilities make her a valuable asset for the rest of the team. Or maybe you'll be a cowardly sniper, *you coward*.

As you'd expect, mixing in so many different characters with so many abilities – each has different damage, health, speed and so on – balance is one of the most important factors in *Battleborn*. We've no idea how it will fare in the open, but from our time with the game it seemed to have things generally down, aside from the odd occasion of losing our axe and not being able to pick it up again. "For competitive to be good we have to aggressively support balance patching," ▶

DID YOU KNOW? This is Gearbox's first original game since 2009's *Borderlands*

"The game features 25 characters, each with different powers, all falling into one of three categories: defender, attacker or support"

Montana
Caldarius

OPEN GEAR BOX

It's bright, colourful and stupidly over the top. Just as you'd expect in a game where the entire universe is about to end.

LB

600 600 400

WWW.IMAGINESHOP.CO.UK

26

X-ONE MAGAZINE | 21



While the 25 characters have different abilities, it's all pretty familiar. Sniping, for example, is present and correct.

TALKING TO RANDY VARNELL

Creative director, Gearbox Software



PREVIOUSLY



1 BORDERLANDS: THE HANDSOME COLLECTION

Borderlands 2 and *The Pre-Sequel* in one package? What's not to love!



2 ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

Not a pure Gearbox production, but *A:CM* was a big piece of rubbish

■ *Battleborn* has confused some people – is it a MOBA? Isn't it? How do you get the message across?

Remember back to *Borderlands*, it was this kind of an indescribable game – we went with 'It's kind of *Diablo* meets *Halo*', but it's not really either of them. But it's why we make games at Gearbox – we want to make something new. Sure it should have recognisable components, something you can understand and relate to from other games and other styles, but at the end of the day if we do our job well we've created a new experience. You're not just buying our version of someone else's game, you're getting a new experience that mixes familiar elements with new ones, and hopefully puts it all together in an exciting way.

■ Balance is very important – how are you approaching it?

One of the big things we also wanted to do with *Battleborn* was bring back the competitive element, it's been a while since Gearbox has done anything like that. You could duel on *Borderlands*, but let's be honest, we never balanced for that; once someone phase-locked you in a bubble, the duel was over! But we knew if we wanted to come

back to competitive we had to start with balance, so the very beginning of *Battleborn*'s design and plans were all about balance. The best answer I can give is that we are very competitive gamers here at Gearbox, we know what good and well-balanced games feel like and we really hope we can get there.

■ Player feedback helps, but how do you balance that with balancing?

Yeah, it's really important to monitor the community to hear them express what they feel, but we also have the data on the back end. Usually the truth is somewhere between what the data says and what people are saying. Neither are right, but the two together, with a bit of investigative research, we can find out adjustments and tweaks we need to make.

■ Would anyone play *Battleborn* alone? Is that even possible?

There's something for everyone in it – we've tried to make a game with broad appeal. The challenge for our project I think has been not losing focus on our game while doing that. You make it too broad and it doesn't do anything well, but I think we've done a good job of managing that.

Varnell said, "We're even working on being able to add balance patches without even having to patch the main game so we can do some tuning on the back end, the servers and so on, to keep it as close as we can. I can't wait."

All of this feeds into the main game, which is comprised of a few different modes. There's the fairly standard 'capture the point' mode, made all the more hectic and tactical thanks to the relatively small size of the maps and the available talents for your characters. There's also a mode called Meltdown, which requires you to shepherd minions to a target area – get a set number of them through and you win, while the opposition is attempting to do the same. It's a strange mix of RTS, tower defence, MOBA and FPS, and – when it all comes together – it's a lot of fun.

"You can definitely see where we took some influences from MOBAs, but it's not what you would call a MOBA game," Varnell explained, "It's a shooter game with MOBA elements. In fact, we took elements from RTS games – in Meltdown you can be a resource farmer if you want, and it can help the team, building turrets and units and so on, while hindering the opponent because they have no shards with which to purchase anything or activate gear as fast. It gives you a lot

X MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

IT LOOKS AND FEELS A LOT LIKE BORDERLANDS... ONLY A BIT DIFFERENT



It wouldn't be a videogame if it didn't have a woman with ill-advised clothing completely unsuitable for actual battle.



It's not a lie to say there are RTS elements in *Battleborn* – strategic building of turrets and the like can be a big help.



The style, the bright visuals, even the menus – *Battleborn* takes a lot of cues from *Borderlands*, that's for sure. But when that's such a great series, it's probably for the best that Gearbox's next game takes cues from it – rather than from one of its other games, like *Colonial Marines* or *Duke Nukem Forever*.



“Battleborn also likes to give players a constant sense of reward”

more options – sure, you can field a team of purely aggressive players, but there's a lot more to it than that.”

Battleborn also likes to give players a constant sense of reward – while there is a levelling and loot system outside of the matches themselves, in each encounter your character begins at level one and makes their way up to level 10. Along the way you make a one-or-the-other choice every time you level up, and you hold on to the powers you unlock just for that match before they're reset at the end. This makes for a game that encourages tinkering – Varnell calls it his ‘fiddle with it’ game – and asks players to pay attention to their favourite builds, while at the same time experimenting with them.

All of this is taking place with a storyline – something that definitely drags it away from the straightforward MOBA/competitive shooter genre. *Battleborn* is set around the last star in the universe, as all the others have died and we're about to

experience the heat death of said universe and... oh good god isn't that immeasurably sad? “I think that's what we love about entertainment,” Varnell chuckled, “You can have that depth and deal with those emotional topics and themes, but we can have the levity in there that brings it back out. Shakespeare did that – it's been a device for a long amount of time!” That levity is present, with comedy voiceovers and the sort of humour you may remember from the *Borderlands* series – it's definitely a good way to take on the end of the universe, though we're not sure every joke will land...

It's hard to know how *Battleborn* will be received on release, but right now we're happy with what we've seen and played. Home to a light-hearted tone and a unique mix of – admittedly derived – playstyles, there's a lot of potential here. So long as everything is well-balanced and we don't see huge server problems on release, *Battleborn* could be a dark horse next year. Kind of like *Borderlands* in 2009...

✕ IAN DRANSFIELD

HOW'S IT LOOKING? It's hard to tell if *Battleborn* will strike a chord with either shooter or MOBA fans. As fun and well-balanced as it is, there are some kinks to be ironed out.

HIGH FIVE

1 CHARACTERS

25 characters to play as, each with different stats and abilities – that's a lot of FPS mechanics to re-learn.

2 CHANGE

There are a few different modes to *Battleborn*, and they're surprisingly different from one another.

3 LOOKS

It takes some cues from *Borderlands*, but *Battleborn* has its own distinct – and rather lovely – look.

4 HUMOUR

It will fall flat for some – we certainly cringed at some jokes – but it's nice to see a game not taking itself too seriously.

5 STORY

There is an actual story mode in the game, though it's unlikely to be enough to convince people without friends to invest.

FABLE LEGENDS

Where the hell is this game?

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft
Studios

DEVELOPER
Lionhead
Studios

CREDITS
Fable [2004]
Fable III [2010]
The Journey
[2012]

PLAYERS
1-5

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
TBC

WEBSITE
fablelegends.
com

TWITTER
@Lionhead
Studios



We can't be the only ones starting to question why the free-to-play brawler still isn't sat in our download queue, or at least entering its oft-rumoured open beta. Truth be told, Lionhead hasn't done the best job of explaining or detailing what the abandonment of its classic RPG roots is actually going to bring to the table, and we imagine the introduction of Windows 10 cross-play support hasn't helped a great deal either.

For those out of the loop, *Fable Legends* will see Lionhead pluck the famously choice-driven franchise out of its comfort zone and presents a free-to-play, online-focused game where teams of four heroes compete against one player serving as the villain, who has the ability to manipulate the tightly contested arena levels by setting traps, positioning groups of enemies and unleashing them on their unsuspecting foes as they see fit. Imagine *Evolve* meets *Dungeon Keeper*, but, you know, better than that sounds.

Truth be told, we don't understand the reasons for the delay. We've had the pleasure of playing *Fable Legends* on multiple occasions over the last 12 months and have been constantly impressed by what we've played. Playing as a Hero requires teamwork, though the core hack-and-slash gameplay of *Fable* is still (essentially) intact. The villain is an interesting idea, and one executed, seemingly, perfectly – on the single map we have played over and over again, at least. Besting a group of four other real players with supreme tactics is immensely satisfying.

Game director for *Fable Legends*, David Eckelberry, has even admitted that there is no release date in sight, commenting after Microsoft suggested we would see the game in October, "No idea where this date [came from]. We don't have an announced day of release yet, not even internally." Though follow-up from Microsoft seems to infer that we might at least see the beta open-up in time for Christmas, as the publisher comments, "We look forward to opening the world of *Fable Legends* to players this holiday, but don't have anything more to share on specific release timing."

Of course, questions are now starting to be raised. With Lionhead seemingly eager to hide *Fable Legends* from

"Playing as a Hero requires teamwork, though the core hack-and-slash gameplay of *Fable* is still intact"

players outside of its core fan base (that are currently enjoying the beta under an *incredibly* strict NDA that restricts them from even mentioning that they are a part of it) and the press, it's starting to get a little worrying. The problem Lionhead now faces is that the longer it lets *Fable Legends* linger, the more players will start asking after *Fable IV*, that's the nature of the business.

"We're not working on a *Fable 4*, *Fable Legends* is our priority and will be for the foreseeable future," commented the studio to concerned fans online, standing by its commitment to the 'games as a service' model of delivery. Online-only games and the free-to-play model aren't particularly loved by consumers right now – though Lionhead's fair approach to both should clear up any misconceptions people may hold. Cosmetic items and extra Heroes will cost cash (with four heroes always in rotation for all players), while everything else – from levels, missions and game areas – will always be free. It's hard to argue with such a fair model, especially considering how fun the free base game is almost certainly going to be.

Lionhead's drastic revival of the *Fable* franchise isn't going to be for everyone. We just hope it's given the space to succeed with its playful combat, endearing style and fair-approach to free-to-play. The sooner everyone trusts in the content they've already created and put out in front of us time and time again, and gets those servers stress-tested on a global scale, the sooner **X-ONE** can start kicking your arses as an almighty, all powerful villain on Xbox Live; consider the challenge issued.

✱ JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Every time we play *Fable Legends* we are surprised by how fun and fluid the game is. It's going to buck your expectations, but that doesn't have to be a bad thing.

COMMUNITY REACTION

"Played the game once, was ok, looked lovely but just doesn't feel like *Fable*."
@ChunkyLover25

"It was better than I expected to be fair but I'm not sure I'm being drawn back to it with so many other games coming out."
@MrATav

"It's gone completely off my radar. I want R6 Siege, Star Wars Battlefront, Tomb Raider!"
@Shambles11

"Definitely not waning."
@Eckelberry



"We're not working on a *Fable IV*. *Fable Legends* is our priority and will be for the foreseeable future"





❖ Windows 10 support means that your friends, even if they don't own an Xbox One, will be able to jump into games and play with you – so long as they have Gold.

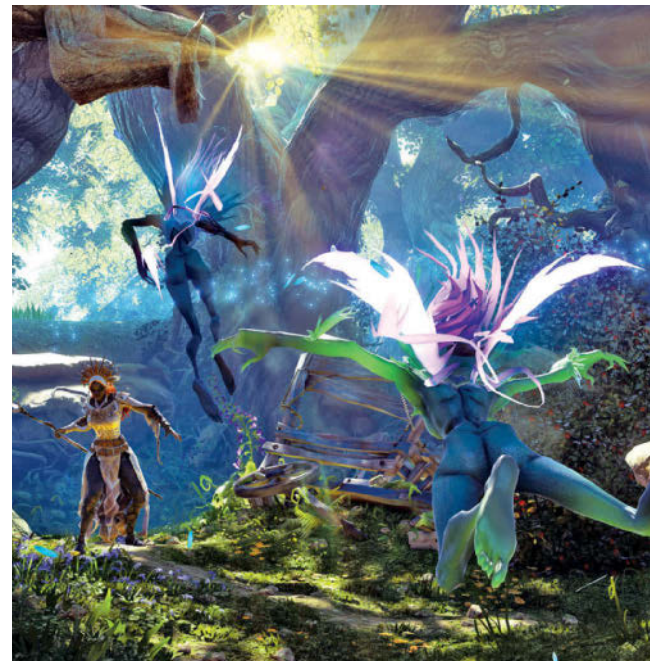
DID YOU KNOW? This will be the eighth *Fable* release from Lionhead, if you include the easily forgotten bits like *The Journey* and *Heroes*



❖ Four heroes will always be in rotation in *Fable Legends*, though you can purchase your favourites if you want to ensure they are always available.

❖ MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH SOMETHING FRESH



Think about it; Lionhead was clearly at a crossroads with the *Fable* franchise. Between the disappointment of *Fable III* and the disaster that was *Fable: The Journey*, the studio had to do something new. Sure, we would love to see an open-world *Albion* as much as you all would, but don't write this off before you've played it.

“It’s ambitious, it’s impressive and there is still a chance it won’t come together at all”

YOUR HERO
Jack Joyce is voiced and mo-capped by Hollywood’s Shawn Ashmore, the lead protagonist in *Quantum Break*, a hero who develops reality manipulation powers after a time travel experiment goes awry at Riverport University.

AMPLIFIED ACTION
Gameplay looks fast and frantic in *Quantum Break*, with time stutters opening up new gameplay opportunities. Think Max Payne’s bullet time basics, except he has OD’d on all of those pills he likes to take.

DID YOU KNOW? *X-Men*’s Shawn Ashmore has joined the cast as hero Jack Joyce, causing Remedy to re-record large portions of the live-action content

QUANTUM BREAK

Time changes everything

SET IN STONE
After so many delays, *Quantum Break* was announced over two years ago now, it's great to see that the game finally has a release date set in stone. Remedy is known for taking its time, but it looks like the project is on track to launch this April.

THE CAUSE
The reason time is unravelling? That would be Paul Serene - performed by *Game Of Thrones'* Aidan Gillen - the guy that decided messing with time was a great idea. He also runs Monarch, the company that's trying stop Joyce from interfering.

THE SHOW
From what we've seen of it so far, *Quantum Break's* live action component actually has surprisingly solid production values. Microsoft might have ditched its TV aspirations, but they live on in Remedy.

SECOND SCREEN

THANK THE CLOUD
Thanks to the power of the Cloud, you'll be able to pick up episodes of *Quantum Break* on the move via SmartGlass and catch up while you're away from your console.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Game Studios

DEVELOPER
Remedy Entertainment

CREDITS
Max Payne [2001]
May Payne 2 [2003]
Alan Wake [2010]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
Yes

RELEASE DATE
5 April 2016

WEBSITE
remedygames.com

TWITTER
@remedygames



You might not be able to tell from the screenshots alone, but when you see it running just a few feet from your face it's quite clear that *Quantum Break* is going to be a major step up in terms of performance for the Xbox One. While we are, quite clearly, big supporters of the console and everything it has to offer, we can't deny that the rivalling PlayStation 4 has had some beautiful games from day one. The likes of *Titanfall* and *Dead Rising 3* were a little washed out, while *Halo 5: Guardians* hides its beauty behind a shiny sci-fi veneer. Remedy's killer Xbox One exclusive has the potential to change all of that.

Not only does the action-packed time-manipulating gameplay look freakishly fluid, as hero Jack Joyce utilises an array of impressive time manipulation powers that will delight fans of *Max Payne's* bullet time and *Alan Wake's* environment twisting logic, but Remedy also looks to be approaching a new dawn for photorealism. Every character in *Quantum Break* also has a real life counterpart actor, recreated so accurately in game that you'll be able to easily recognise and identify with them in the accompanying live action show that will show you how your decisions and actions impacts the world between gameplay chapters across 20-minute episodes. It's ambitious, it's impressive, and there is still a chance it won't come together at all. Hey, we're realists.

But we trust Remedy. The delay into 2016 has given the studio time to reconfigure the gameplay to suit its two playable protagonists - cutting Beth Wilder out of the picture - not to mention re-record entire sections due to the late casting of *X-Men's* Shawn Ashmore as Jack Joyce. *Quantum Break* is going to be one of the best looking games we've ever seen, all we have to do now is hope and pray that its bite is as potent as its bark.

JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? *Quantum Break* impresses more and more every time we see it. It looks like a delicious blend of Remedy's best games - and that's something we can get down with.

FINAL FANTASY XV

Ride birds, catch fish, explore nature, level up...

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
In-house

CREDITS
Final Fantasy VII
[1997]
Final Fantasy X
[2001]
Final Fantasy
XIV: A Realm
Reborn [2010]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
2016

WEBSITE
finalfantasyXV.
com

TWITTER
@FFXVEN



There are certain definitive traits that must, in some form or other, be present and correct in every major *Final Fantasy* release. Spiky hair is key, as are melodic piano riffs, and beasts that look as though they've come straight from the annals of Greek mythology. No surprise, then, to see the inclusion of chocobos. Given *FFXV*'s open-world ambitions there needs to be some system to allow you to cover these huge environments. It seems chocobos are still the answer, particularly when you find yourself navigating routes away from the world's arterial road system.

Those roads can be driven along in your squad's car, but the vehicle is too bulky to be useful in regions that include dense pockets of trees, rock, etc. But chocobos can perform short aerial glides and power slide turns that belie their seemingly ungainly proportions. Sadly, it seems that chocobos are available only through an in-game rental system, as opposed to you being able to raise and breed them.

On your chocobo travels you might come across locations which can be fished, a mini-game kicking in should you decide to try your luck with rod and bait. Supposedly, fishing requires player skill to execute, as opposed to relying on a purely mathematical approach that awards success based on some sort of fishing proficiency that you've levelled up. In theory, then, the 'best' fish can be caught the first time you dip hook into water.

Once caught, fish can be transformed into meals for your party to consume. In its current form the act of fishing is surprisingly dramatic, borrowing music and a tone that wouldn't feel out of place in one of this series' more dramatic battle sequences. Fishing in games, it seems, is always more theatrical than the real thing.

Clearly, *FFXV* is taking more than the odd leaf out of *FFXIV*'s playbook. Wisely, though, Square has foregone the stat-heavy nature of *FFXIV* in place of something more action-orientated here. Taking ideas from an MMO is fine, but copying them over wholesale to a single-player experience is generally a bad idea.

✦ **JOHN ROBERTSON**

HOW'S IT LOOKING? All *Final Fantasy* games seem wonderful before they're released, and that's no different here. The test of quality will come after 50 hours-plus of play time.



✦ Chocobos have never enjoyed this level of graphical detail and sophistication, the available hardware allowing for much more detail across the board.

DID YOU KNOW? *FFXV* is part of the Fabula Nova Crystallis series of games

“Chocobos can perform short aerial glides and power slide turns that belie their seemingly ungainly proportions”

✦ Luna is a childhood friend of protagonist Noctis, as well as being an 'Oracle' capable of conversing with the gods of *FFXV*'s world.



✦ You know you've caught a whopper when it takes two athletic dudes to hoist the thing into the air in celebration...



✦ Noctis, our hero, enjoys dark clothes and hair styles first pioneered by boy bands. He is modern man.

SPECIAL OVERSEAS OFFER SAVE UP TO 17% ON A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION THIS CHRISTMAS

ALL TITLES
JUST
£49.99



REAL CRIME
Uncover the most fascinating and notorious true crimes in history
13 issues, save 4%



HOW IT WORKS
The action-packed science and technology magazine
13 issues, save 10%

- * EXCLUSIVE CHRISTMAS OFFER
- * SAVE UP TO 17% ON THE SHOP PRICE
- * NEVER MISS AN ISSUE OF YOUR FAVOURITE MAGAZINE
- * FREE E-CARD TO SEND WHEN YOU BUY AS A GIFT
- * IDEAL CHRISTMAS GIFT - THAT LASTS ALL YEAR



ALL ABOUT HISTORY
Bringing history to life for the whole family
13 issues, save 15%



GADGET
Packed with the latest, coolest and most exciting tech
12 issues, save 17%



WORLD OF ANIMALS
Everything you need to know about the world's most amazing wildlife
13 issues, save 4%



HISTORY OF WAR
The stories, strategies, heroes and machines of historic conflicts
12 issues, save 17%

FIND OUR FULL RANGE OF TITLES AT THIS
GREAT PRICE ONLINE!

ONLINE AT
www.imaginesubs.co.uk/xmas151



DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHER
Inspiration, tutorials and tools for enthusiasts and professionals
12 issues, save 17%



RETRO GAMER
The number one magazine for classic gaming
12 issues, save 17%



ALL ABOUT SPACE
Discover the wonders of the solar system and beyond
13 issues, save 15%



SCIFINOW
The number one magazine for sci-fi, fantasy and horror fans
12 issues, save 17%

ORDER HOTLINE

+44 (0)1795 592 869

BUY AS
A GIFT
OR TREAT
YOURSELF!

Use code **XMAS151** for this extra-special price.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA

DEVELOPER
Coldwood

CREDITS
Skiracing 2006
[2005]
Ski-Doo
Challenge
[2009]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
TBC

SMARTGLASS?
TBC

RELEASE DATE
Q1 2016

WEBSITE
unravelgame.
com

TWITTER
@Unravel_Game

UNRAVEL

Getting wrapped up in EA's highly anticipated indie title



"With *Unravel*, we want to capture your imagination, and test your cleverness, and touch your heart," says Martin Sahlin, creative director at Coldwood

Interactive. Not the easiest of tasks, of course, but everything we've seen of *Unravel* so far seems to suggest that the team is succeeding. The game is so stuffed with character that it's making other games with huge budgets, being developed by hundreds of people around the world, look bland in comparison.

While we're still several months away from a finished version of *Unravel* – the team working on it is small, after all – the game is looking better every time we see it. The levels we've seen are beautiful, with the background scenery drawing the eye just as much as the action in the foreground. And there's plenty of

action – but of the thinking kind, not the 'shooting everything and blowing stuff up' kind. The level we've seen puts Yarny, the tiny hero made of string, at the mercy of the sea, with deadly waves washing in and threatening the make the little guy disturbingly soggy. Your job is to use the rocks, wooden platforms and other scenery to navigate to a nearby jetty – and the relative safety of dry land.

"The gameplay is all physics-based; it's got some touches of magic, but it's grounded in realism," explains Sahlin. "What you do and how you tackle problems is really up to you and your creativity. When things get more difficult, you'll have to think of different ways to combine Yarny's abilities and use things in the environment to find a way forward."

And from what we've seen so far, that's a lot harder than it sounds. For such a charming, cute adventure, the

gameplay is surprisingly tough. The puzzles may be easy enough to work out, but the challenging circumstances – like the waves washing in with alarming regularity – mean that you need to work fast if you don't want to warp back to the previous checkpoint.

Of course, there's more to the game than the puzzles and platforming. "There are many other kinds of moments beyond the obstacles, moments of reflection, of wonder, of beauty, and of discovery," considers Sahlin. "With *Unravel* we want to capture your imagination, and test your cleverness, and touch your heart." D'aww.

✕ **STEPHEN ASHBY**

HOW'S IT LOOKING? We can't wait to see more of this. The art style is beautiful, the puzzles look challenging and the character is SO GODDAMN CUTE. Don't mess this up, Coldwood. Don't do it!

"The background scenery draws the eye just as much as the action in the foreground"

PHYSICS FOCUSED

So far, all we've seen of the game has been physics focused – there's no combat just yet. Whether this will be enough to maintain our interest through the levels remains to be seen, but it does appear that there are plenty of new abilities that Yarny can learn, from swinging across gaps to tying onto kites and taking to the sky.



SILENT STORYTELLER

Considering that Yarny is mute, we're so far impressed by how much emotion he manages to convey. "*Unravel* is a game about reaching out, about mending broken bonds," says Sahlin. We can see it, too – we've seen Yarny stumble across other yarn-based creatures, and even viewing memories in his surroundings – faint outlines of children sitting on rocks suggest he may be trying to get home.

DID YOU KNOW? Every level in the game is based on a location from Coldwood's home country of Sweden



KEEP IT SIMPLE

Games like *Rayman Legends* and *Shovel Knight* have reinvigorated the 2D platformer genre in recent years, and *Unravel* is riding this wave with a simple, beautiful world. But by keeping things simple and focusing entirely on physics-based puzzles Coldwood is taking a risk – most platformers need another hook, whether it's combat, speed challenges or a multiplayer component.

It pays to stick to a formation that best matches the skills inherent to your team. Obviously, you're going to want to put the guy with a shield in front...

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

It's reality, almost as we know it...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montreal

CREDITS
Splinter Cell:
Blacklist [2013]
Far Cry 4 [2014]
Watch Dogs
[2014]

PLAYERS
1-10

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
1 December 2015

WEBSITE
rainbow6.ubi.
com

TWITTER
@Rainbow6Game



What is *Rainbow Six Siege*? "It's a rebranding," answers Ubisoft Montreal's Chris Hendry, the senior environment artist on the project.

"We've kept a lot of the elements of previous *Rainbow Six* games – it being very tactical, you only getting one life, etc – but in general the majority of the game is a rebranding that works around some of those core elements to make sure it stayed very tactical in design."

That tactical focus is immediately obvious, standing front and centre before you're even put to work in your first match. Prior to the action starting you must select yourself an Operator, an individual with a specific gadget/weapon set that can hold huge influence over how you act and play. No two people in a match can play as the same Operator, opening the door for individuals to play as a team and combine the relative strengths of their gear to create a unified whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. If you're good enough.

Some Operators are better suited to direct attack, others to sitting back and providing ranged support. Then you've got those that come loaded with traps, others with medical equipment and

others still with the ability to sniff out and neutralise the rival team's electronic assets. Simply put: going it alone is not only an inefficient course of action, it's the best way to miss out on the diversity created when you put different characters and talents into a shared situation.

However, the Operators are only as interesting as the world they inhabit. In a game with this degree of tactical focus, getting the locations right is essential rather than optional or merely beneficial. It's a need that Hendry is all too well aware of. "The main thing we focused on when we made the levels were the objective locations," Hendry explains. "When you look at a map like 'House' we have to make sure the objective can be covered in a decent way [by the defenders] using all the gadgets and weapons available for players to choose from."

"What we don't want, though, are objective locations that can be managed in such a way that it completely blocks the attackers from being able to attack properly. Making sure the objective locations don't lead to the attackers or the defenders being overpowered is really important. Once that's thought about, then we think about the Operators."

"It pays to coordinate with your teammates to create choke points and, potentially, cut off certain pathways entirely"

The game mode Hendry refers to involves one side trying to recover a hostage from their opponents. Said hostage begins the game in a room within the level, be that the aforementioned house or the newly announced dock yard, snowy chalet or commercial airliner. Should you, as a defender, be using an Operator loaded up with traps, it pays to coordinate with your teammates to create choke points and, potentially, cut off certain pathways entirely.

"We have consultants that came onto the project very early during production and we also have a very good realisation team that goes very deep into this kind of thing," says Hendry when discussing the



HIGH FIVE

1 OPERATE IN UNISON

Teammates cannot play as the same class as each other, encouraging you to work together to overcome any deficiencies.

2 BE SMART

Running and gunning is not going to get you very far in *Siege*. Go slow, go quietly and make sure to check every one of those corners.

3 DON'T BE SHY

The precision and level of teamwork promoted here means that constant communication between allies is essential.

4 EXPERIMENT

Sticking to a single class might provide a level of comfort, but it pays to understand the abilities of every class you might come into contact with.

5 REALBLAST TECHNOLOGY

All but the strongest of walls and doors can be demolished thanks to the implementation of Ubisoft's 'Realblast' tech.



✔ Learning which parts of the environment can and can't be navigated is crucial to staying a step ahead of your foes.

DID YOU KNOW? Ubisoft's plan was to release *Siege* earlier this year, but decided extra dev time was needed

inspiration for these gadgets, traps and environments. Everything, supposedly, is grounded in some sort of reality; whether that's gadgets used in the field today, or technology currently in the early stages of development. "We are a fantasy-based-on-reality," expands Hendry, "so we do play around with some things here and there, but a lot of it is things that are, at the very least, feasible in reality. There's nothing that's too out of this world. Things have to feel modern, but they also have to fit with what *Rainbow Six* is all about and what we're trying to portray."

From what we've played, there's little to suggest that *Siege* is failing to make good on those desires for a "feasible", albeit slightly fantastical, tone and imagining. Getting that balance between spectacle and reality right, however, is never easy and Ubisoft Montreal will have performed an impressive feat if that balance remains intact once hundreds of shared hours have been poured into *Siege*.

✔ **JOHN ROBERTSON**

HOW'S IT LOOKING? As of now, there isn't a vaguely-based-on-reality shooter on the horizon that looks quite as impressive as *Siege*. One to keep more than an eye on.



X MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

STRUCTURED CLASSES = UNSTRUCTURED DIVERSITY



The fact that each player on a team is playing as a unique Operator (read: class) means that you've always got plenty of options when it comes to brainstorming how best to attack your given situation. While Operators can hold their own in a variety of situations, you are much stronger if you work together as a team and combine different skills/tools together for a more interesting and unpredictable result.

YOOKA-LAYLEE

Love Rare? You'll love this...

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Team17

DEVELOPER
Playtonic Games

CREDITS
Banjo Kazooie [1998]
Grabbed By The Ghoules [2003]
Viva Piñata [2006]

PLAYERS
1-4

KINECT?
TBA

SMARTGLASS?
TBA

RELEASE DATE
October 2016

WEBSITE
playtonicgames.com

TWITTER
@Playtonic Games



There are two things getting us excited for *Yooka-Laylee*. The first is the art style – *just look at how pretty it is* – and the second is the fact that almost every member of the Playtonic team used to work for Rare. That means they've got artists from *Banjo-Kazooie*, *Donkey Kong Country* and *Kameo*, an animator from *Conker's Bad Fur Day* and designers from *Perfect Dark*. All in all, it's quite a collective CV, and it feels like this is the game Rare *should* have been making for the last five years, instead of crappy titles like *Kinect Sports*.

And from the sounds of things, *Yooka-Laylee* is coming together rather well. The first world is, apparently, already complete – and the bright little protagonists are running and leaping around it with reckless abandon. This is pretty big news; the first level is always the hardest to finish in a game like this, as the moves, animations and basic game mechanics all need to be in good working order. The game is still set for an October 2016 release – and we don't expect that to move much – but it's good to see it progressing well.

We've also been given our first look at a new character, and while she doesn't yet have a name, it's clear that she's going to need some serious help from Yooka and Laylee. The skeleton likely isn't going to be asking you to find her keys, but she'll need some water at the very least (or possibly some seasoning). And as you can see from the early concept art – along with all the screens that have been released so far – the art style is a thing of beauty.

The bright, colourful environments are already shaping up to throw some serious contrast on the greys and browns of many triple-A titles. Developers seem to realise that people are bored of the same old colours, and with *Unravel*, the recent *Rayman* titles and now *Yooka-Laylee* all offering tough platforming challenges wrapped up in cute, colourful design, there's some serious variety coming to Xbox One. *Call Of Duty* and *Assassin's Creed* might use the same grey/brown colour palette for every game, but we love a bit of purple and lime green every now and then.

✱ **STEPHEN ASHBY**

HOW'S IT LOOKING? We can't wait to see gameplay of this, let alone get our hands on it. It's shaping up like a classic Rare title, which is something we've been waiting for since 2001.

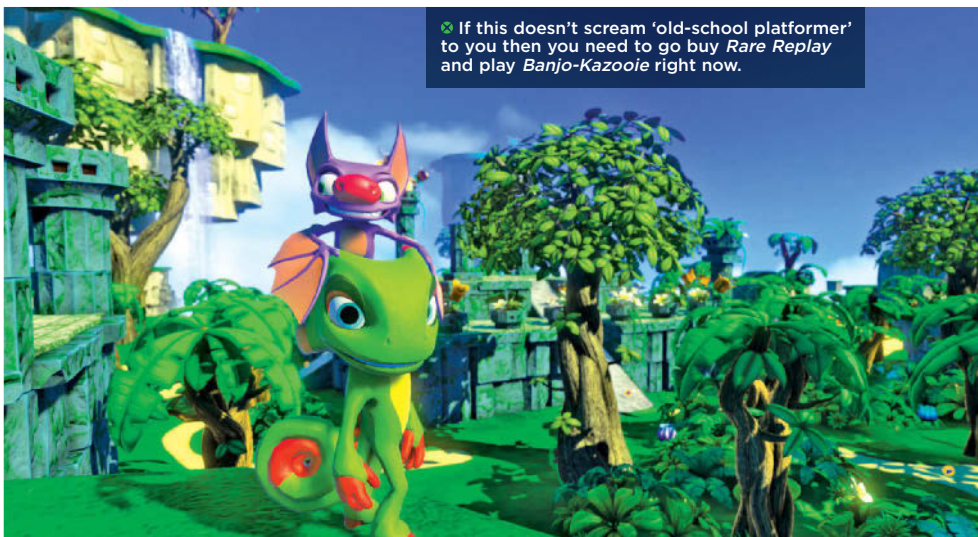


✱ Steve Mayles, the character art director on *Yooka-Laylee*, also created Banjo, Kazooie and the Kong clan from *DK64*. Not bad.

DID YOU KNOW? Playtonic Games is made up almost exclusively of ex-Rare employees



✱ This lovely lady is in a little bit of a pickle – and in one early level she's going to be asking Yooka and Laylee for some help.



✱ If this doesn't scream 'old-school platformer' to you then you need to go buy *Rare Replay* and play *Banjo-Kazooie* right now.



"The little green and purple protagonists are running and leaping around with reckless abandon"



Console Finance.com



From Just **£4.50** p/week

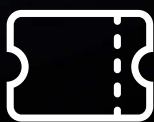
That's the equivalent to:



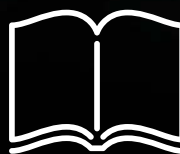
A PINT
OF BEER



A STEAK
PIE



1/3 OF A
CINEMA TICKET



A MAGAZINE



A FAST FOOD
MEAL



1/2 A CD

All logos are trademarks of their respective companies.

“Gears can now embrace storytelling, so long as it’s still carrying a Lancer”

✖ It looks like Marcus, Dom, Baird and (The) Cole (Train) are out of action for this sequel; expect to meet a new cast of characters.

DID YOU KNOW? The Coalition is the new name for Black Tusk Studios, formed to build and carry the Gears legacy into the future

GEARS OF WAR 4

Are the rumours of a prequel true?

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Game Studios

DEVELOPER
The Coalition

CREDITS
N/A

PLAYERS
1-TBC

KINECT?
TBC

SMARTGLASS?
TBC

RELEASE DATE
2016

WEBSITE
gearsofwar.com/en-gb

TWITTER
@GearsOfWar



The Coalition has one hell of a job in front of it. We’ve been back to the original *Gears Of War* trilogy and, as much as we loved it, we never realised how breezy the plot is. The original, in particular, moves with the speed and fury of a runaway freight train with a Brumak at the helm. That also means it’s a little light on set-up, story or resolution as a result. Something has to change now that Microsoft has wrangled control away from Epic Games for a franchise revival.

The original reveal for *Gears 4* back at E3 was suffocated by darkness – and we mean that literally; it’s near impossible to actually see anything without burning out the LEDs in your monitor. But we did it anyway, for you (the address to send us a new screen is in on the back page, you animals) and there are some interesting titbits of information to glean – especially if you pay close attention to what studio head Rod Fergusson has to say for himself online.

Lets get a little speculative; with Fergusson quoted as wanting to bring back ‘that sense of mystery’ that was imbued in the original game – with its apparent focus on suspense and dangerous creatures – we are looking directly to *Gears Of War’s* Act Two as the inspiration here. This is the rare occasion that the game slows down long enough for you to smell the decaying roses (and corpses) as Marcus and Dom desperately



✖ The gameplay released would seem to suggest that co-op is returning, though with only two characters revealed thus far, will it be scaled back?

resist the Kryll, moving street by street to find reprieve from the danger the Locust present. Consider that mission and return to the *Gears 4* gameplay demo and we can draw a few comparisons.

Two characters, seemingly stranded against overwhelming odds, while moving into the unknown through complete darkness, yeah, we see the inspiration clearly. Fergusson has spoken in the past about his wishes for *Gears 4* to have a more intimate and morally ambiguous narrative, and we could easily see – especially if the long standing rumours of this being a prequel are true – that the Xbox One exclusive will perhaps cover

humanity’s first steps onto the planet of Sera. So much of Emergence Day, of the days before Marcus was released from prison – the interesting story stuff, basically – is still a major mystery, and we can only hope that The Coalition grabs this opportunity to explore it. Games have grown up in the last decade; *Gears* can now embrace storytelling, as long as it’s still carrying a Lancer.

✖ **JOSH WEST**

HOW’S IT LOOKING? *Gears Of War 4* is dark and dangerous, and that’s likely the way it will stay until we see more of it later into 2016.

SCALEBOUND

How to train your freaking awesome dragon

DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Microsoft Game Studios

DEVELOPER

Platinum Games

CREDITS

Bayonetta [2009]
Vanquish [2010]
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance [2013]

PLAYERS

1-4

KINECT?

No

SMARTGLASS?

No

RELEASE DATE

2016

WEBSITE

xbox.com/en-GB/games/scalebound

TWITTER

@Scalebound



We are finally starting to peel back the layers of *Scalebound*, one of 2016's most mysterious Xbox

One exclusives. Platinum Games recently let us see it in action behind closed doors and, while we are getting behind the monstrous scale of the action, we are *really* interested in its potential to tell a different kind of story, to change the way we think about customisation and combat in action games.

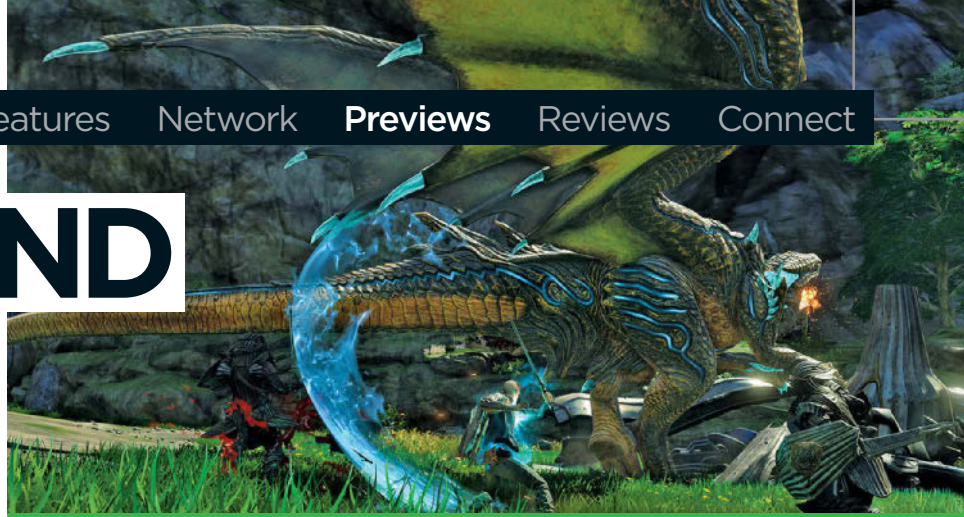
Scalebound features two primary characters, playable protagonist Drew, who game director Hideki Kamiya describes as "a normal guy from Earth - our version of it at least," who has been transported and thrust into the world of Draconis. That's where Thuban soars into the picture, the giant dragon, who can be issued light commands in combat and packs the biggest punch in the epic monster-on-monster battles we've seen.

What's interesting though, is how Platinum Games is handling the balance of customisation and power. Drew isn't a traditional action-RPG warrior; instead he's a kid that finds himself on an adventure through a sun-soaked fantasy land, bonded to a dragon. "We wanted to stay true to who Drew is, a boy from our Earth, so you will see light customisation to differentiate yourself in [co-op], but really the amount of investment, in terms of customisation, comes with Thuban and how you want your dragon to look and play," says Kamiya. "We've only scratched the surface in terms of dragon customisation, types of weapons, types of armour and the different things you can do with your dragon."

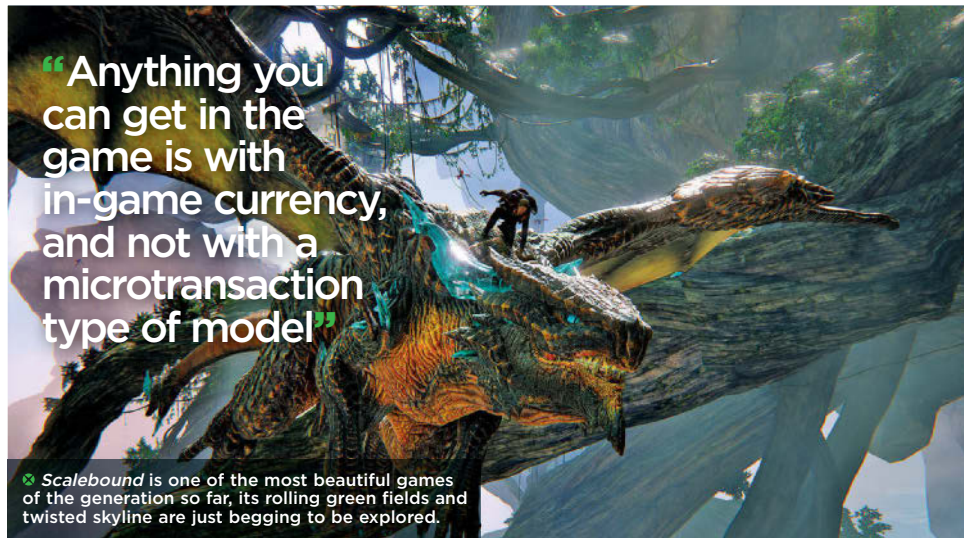
You can alter pretty much everything about your pal; armour type and shape, the elemental flames it breathes, its look, colour and combat styles. This is all done through acquiring an in-game currency; find gems and use Draconis' power-source of Pulse to transform it into monies. "Anything you can get in the game is with in-game currency, and not microtransaction type of model," confirms Kamiya, putting that particular fear to rest. *Scalebound* still has a way to go in development, but with Platinum Games at the helm we are confident Microsoft will have a system-seller on its hands.

✕ JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? *Scalebound* is already one of our most anticipated games of next year, proving that Microsoft is more than capable of delivering more than FPS and racing exclusives on Xbox One.




DID YOU KNOW? *Scalebound* will feature four-player co-op to help with tough encounters






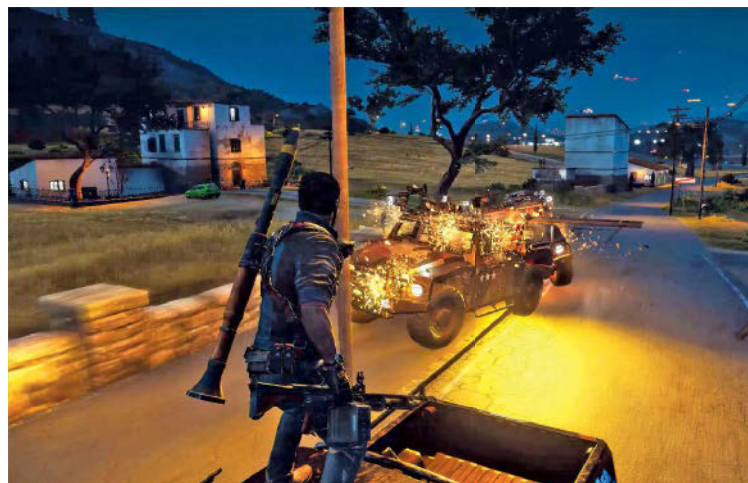
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

 While the main part of the game might be available now (it's very likely that we're waving our lightsabers around *right now*), there's a little extra love on the way from DICE. The *Battle Of Jakku* DLC will be available to everyone on 8 December – with those that pre-ordered the game getting it a week earlier, on 1 December – and will throw players onto the sandy planet of Jakku. The battle you're involved with takes place a few months after the events of *Return Of The Jedi*, and 29 years before the events of *Episode VII: The Force Awakens*, giving us our first JJ Abrams-influenced look at the new *Star Wars* universe. Excited? You should be.


JUST CAUSE 3

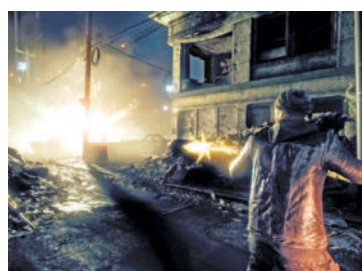
 We talked last month about how *Just Cause 3* was going to offer players one of the biggest playgrounds in gaming history; the map is a whopping 1000 square kilometres, giving you plenty of space to wingsuit around, explode things and grapple nearby cars and civilians. And, as you might expect, with great map size comes great installability (yes, we know that's not a word). If you choose to download the game, you're going to need a massive 42GB of install space to fit it on your Xbox One. That's twice the size of *Far Cry 4*, which was also pretty freaking massive. And we're not even taking into account the inevitable day one patch that every triple-A title seems to come with in modern games. *Sigh*. Still, it's not all bad.

Square Enix has announced a competition for the launch of the game that could see you winning your own island if you are sitting at the top of the leaderboard 90 days after the game goes on sale. The island's location is, as yet, unknown, but it's worth \$50,000 and will probably only cost you loads of lawyers fees to obtain. Oh, and the terms and conditions clarify that it may not be accessible by any means other than boat. Probably better to just opt for the \$50,000 cash alternative, to be honest.



ADRIFT


 We've seen a little more of *Adrift* recently, and it's starting to look like a seriously intense, claustrophobic adventure title. It seems to be as much about finding oxygen and keeping your suit in good order as it does about exploring space, which leads to some tense situations. The game was delayed until early 2016 to coincide with the Oculus Rift launch, but the Xbox One version is still coming, so don't fear (no-one will hear you scream, anyway).



HOMEFRONT THE REVOLUTION

 There's a lot of potential with *Homefront: The Revolution*, but during our recent hands-on, we were just as frustrated as we were excited by the new title. For every impressive, positive thing the team has done, a boring, annoying or just downright stupid thing pops up that kills the experience. Thankfully there are still a few months to go before this hits, so we've got our fingers crossed that Dambuster Studios can make some changes and tweak the gameplay ahead of launch next year.

HALO WARS 2

 Creative Assembly, the development team behind the next *Halo Wars* title, has made it very clear that it doesn't want it to simply be a *Total War* clone set in the *Halo* universe. 343 dropped out of development shortly after suggesting that it could integrate Kinect more with its titles, suggesting that this approach may be dead in the water. Either way, we can expect many more details on this title to appear in early 2016.



MASS EFFECT ANDROMEDA

 It looks like we're going to have to prepare ourselves for a galaxy without Cmdr. Shepard for *Mass Effect: Andromeda*. The next title in the award-winning series will have a distinct lack of Shep – but thankfully that hasn't killed our excitement. After a series of tweets from level and tech designer Jos Hendriks, in which he describes how he and his team are putting together missions to connect set-pieces with brilliant level design, the 12-month wait is going to kill us.



MAFIA III



It looks like the team behind *Mafia III* is working hard to make the new open-world title 'not just another collectathon'. Recent open-world titles (we're looking at you, *Assassin's Creed Unity*) have stopped being so much about the story and focused far too much on side missions, extra unlockables and random encounters. Hanger 13, the development studio that formed specifically to make this game, is eager to avoid that. In fact, it looks like even when random encounters and side missions do appear, they're all tied into the main story. This includes the ongoing mission to weaken the grip of the Italian Mob on the city of New Orleans. When you retake control of areas, you'll have to put one of your three deputies in charge. Which one you pick will affect the relationship between all four characters – in *Mafia III* even the most straightforward decisions may come back to bite you in the ass.

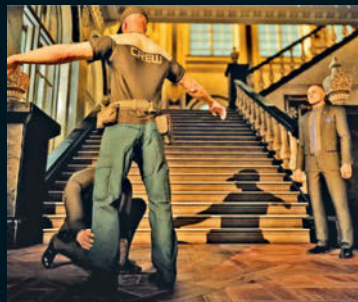


CUPHEAD

After many months of wild excitement about *Cuphead*, we're now at the stage where we really just want it to be finished. We have some concerns about the longevity of the title – as the game is just a series of boss fights, won't it start to get repetitive after the first eight or nine? – but we're definitely happy to give the title the benefit of the doubt for now. We're not expecting it to land until early 2016 now, so there's a little longer to wait. But hey, even if it is repetitive, at least we get to stare at those lovely visuals for a little longer.

HITMAN

After the news that *Hitman* will be delayed until March, we finally know exactly what is going on with IO Interactive's launch plan. The game will launch with three locations – Sapienza, Paris, and Marrakech. Each location will have two missions, giving you six missions initially. The launch will also feature a Contracts mode, with over 800 targets to take down. Three more sandboxes will launch between April and June, with weekly challenges.



THE DIVISION



One of our biggest takeaways from EGX in October wasn't the quality of *The Division*, or its world, or its gameplay – it was the excitement that still surrounds the game. We had some hands-on time with the title, and while it's on the right track, there is still plenty of work for Ubisoft to do before it has a really great game to release. However, we have to say that, despite it being announced more than two years ago, it still drew one of the biggest crowds (and produced a ridiculously massive queue) in the entire show. Whether you love the Ubisoft template, or are sick of climbing towers, you've got to admit that the publisher knows how to make a popular game.

Having said that, we still think there are a few things that Ubisoft needs to do before we get our hands on the beta in December, and adding a melee button should be right at the very top of the list unless it wants players standing two feet apart shooting wildly. But when that beta does go live we should finally be able to test out the online side of things properly and see how the servers fair outside of the highly-controlled event situations we've seen it in so far.



ARK: SURVIVAL EVOLVED

We're already getting far too excited about *Ark*, but every time we think our anticipation has peaked, we get a new piece of information that blows us away all over again. This month it was the news that PC players of the title are now able to breed their own baby dinosaurs. This means that as long as you can make two dinosaurs feel a bit sexy, you're going to have a little dinosaur baby of your very own to love. Then later, you can ride it around and terrorise other players. We're calling ours 'Chompy'.

FOR HONOR

We recently got a look at our first unique hero in *For Honor*: the Oni. This Samurai warrior is clad in leather and wood armour, and wields a painful-looking katana. This blade can be poisoned using one of the Oni's special abilities, to deal more damage to his enemies. His kunai, a projectile, offers damage from a distance, too. We're sure to be seeing more heroes announced soon – the final game will feature male and female warriors from three factions.





WANT MORE?

Go to **GreatDigitalMags.com**
and get great deals on brilliant
back issues & exclusive
special editions

INSTANT ACCESS TO BACK ISSUES



PLUS SAVE
EVEN MORE
IF YOU
SUBSCRIBE

EXCLUSIVE BOOKS & SPECIAL EDITIONS

★ GO TO GREATDIGITALMAGS.COM NOW ★

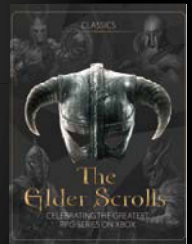
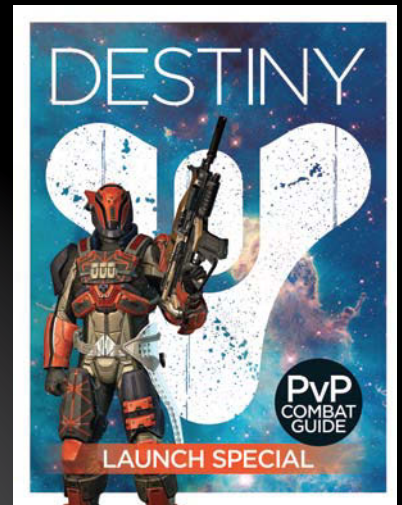
Xbox One Directory

Your guide to the best games available for Xbox One

Over
90
reviews
inside



EDITOR'S
PICK



ALL AVAILABLE TODAY ON
GREATDIGITALMAGS.COM

DEUS EX

Words Josh West





MANKIND DIVIDED

WITH A CIVILISATION IN RUINS, A WORLD FRACTURED BY FEAR, AND A RELUCTANT HERO RETURNING, EIDOS MONTREAL IS LOOKING TO REVOLUTIONISE THE ACTION RPG

Adam Jensen once questioned whether it was in humanity's nature to want to rise above its limits. As we gaze upon the glory that is *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided*, it seems particularly apt. "We were cold, so we harnessed fire, we were weak so we invented tools," he gruffly pondered, as the closing moments of 2011's flawed gem *Human Revolution* came to pass. "Every time we met an obstacle we used creativity and ingenuity to overcome it. The cycle is inevitable, but will the outcome always be good? I guess that will depend on how we approach it."

It's almost as if Eidos Montreal was foreshadowing its future with that closing line. If it truly is in our nature to want to rise above our limits, then Eidos' approach to *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* has the potential to exceed our own crazy expectations. Creativity and ingenuity is being used to define precisely where the line of aspiration is drawn in this new generation of mighty digital dominions and wild interactive expansion, and that is terribly exciting. *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* might just be one of the most ambitious videogames of the current generation: a cyberpunk thriller where player choice defines the development of its world and everything inhabiting it. We *definitely* want this.

BROKEN ALLIANCES

Human Revolution saw Adam Jensen fresh off of the production line, an imperfect transhuman designed to deliver cheap tricks and cringy quips. But in the two years since the events of *Human Revolution*, Jensen has oiled up those augmented joints and dedicated himself to becoming the ultimate combination of technology and biology. Jensen arrives in *Mankind Divided* as a walking weapon – the next evolution of humanity.

"*Mankind Divided* unfolds two years after *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* and now Jensen fully embraces who he is. He's a weapon, and he wants to use it in a good way," says Jean-Francois Dugas, game director. "He works for Task Force 29, an Interpol division focused on fighting terrorism. He knows that to help this world this might not be enough, but he suspects that through Interpol he can get closer to those who are really shaping the world the way it is and stop them."

Jensen is a victim of change in a world crippled by conflict. He might be better equipped than ever – an array of state-of-the-art transhuman augmentations now bound to his plastic heart and artificially intelligent soul – but whether he can succeed is a sore point of contention. That last time Jensen tried to save the world, he failed spectacularly. ■



Augmented citizens are now under massive scrutiny following the Aug Incident in *Human Revolution*.

“The big trigger is at the end of *Human Revolution*, you have the Aug Incident where the augmented population have been hacked and are triggered into a frenzy,” teases *Mankind Divided*’s producer Olivier Proulx. “So that’s kinda the starting point of [Mankind Divided], where the augmented are segregated – that’s the start of the themes in the new game. The people are scared of them, you know, and that comes with a lot of implications. Jensen going to go deeper into what happened, deeper into the conspiracy, and take the fight into his own hands to try and find out what happened.”

Thankfully, we’re suckers for impossible odds. Which is good, because Eidos Montreal is going bigger and bolder with every aspect of its highly anticipated sequel. Enhanced augmentations,

a sexy new engine, overhauled combat mechanics, insanely intricate level design and a desire to let the player run wild in a truly next-generation RPG are all driving forces here. This is all been made possible by Eidos understanding and identifying the flaws of *Human Revolution*, and then going to great lengths to not only fix them, but overhaul the game in a number of integral ways to offer a delicious amount of opportunity to players.

“We let the players know they can do what they want with the mechanics on offer”

REBUILDING DEUS EX

“We were not 100% happy with *Human Revolution*,” admits Proulx. “The first thing we did was look at the four pillars of a *Deus Ex* game: stealth, combat, hacking and social. All the tools available for you as a player are there to let you express yourself; you’re not [supposed] to be restrained by clunky mechanics. That was the starting point of our thought process. Stealth was really strong in [our] first game, so we made some improvements, but largely it stayed the same. [But] combat felt clunky... the

augmentations were not as rewarding or visceral as they could have been,” he continues. “The goal is not to dumb anything else down. We don’t want to make an action game... The goal, really, was to get everything in the game working at the same level.”

That level of consistency is what sets *Mankind*

Divided apart from anything else on Xbox One. It’s a game that revels in offering choices to the player at every step. If you’ve ever wished *Call Of Duty* would take a second to breathe; if you’ve ever reached for the level restart button in *Splinter Cell* after getting spotted; if you thought blind firing in *Metal Gear Solid V* was simply a means to a failed S-Rank run end; then *Mankind Divided* will be your idea of heaven connected to a controller.

The upgrades and alterations made to accommodate the improved combat systems have ushered in an array of changes to the pace and execution of everything else within *Mankind Divided* – it’s a faster, slicker and more empowering beast than its predecessor. Eidos has risen above the limits of the Xbox 360 and updated its philosophy: no matter how you want to play – be it lethally, bombastically, stealthily, or a mixture of all of the above – *Mankind Divided* will find some way to accommodate your desires without gating off any of the awesomeness.

Offensive and defensive augmentations can now be accessed via a turn wheel at any time, while up to five can also be assigned to hot keys on the LB and cross-pad for easy activation. This ensures that it doesn’t matter whether you are blasting your way through cyberpunk slums or creeping through corridors, the tool you need for the task at hand is always only a button press away.

The way the augmentations are managed has also been overhauled. The Battery system has been tweaked, ensuring Jensen no longer needs to gorge himself on energy bars every time he wants to bury his metal fists of fury into an unsuspecting guard’s face. Energy is no longer removed in chunks per ability use; it now has two layers. Some augmentations drain energy while in use – such as Jensen’s active-camouflage and bullet-deflecting Titan Shield – that will then recharge once de-activated. While others – such as the returning PEPS Gun (now a full-

blown augmentation, freeing up your gun hand) and the electric incapacitation Tesla System – will drain a pip of energy, which will subsequently require a BioCell to recharge. It balances the augmentations, giving a sense of power and control to the player.

“Our goal has always been to let players

play the way they want to play, whether it was combat or stealth,” says Dugas, echoing Proulx’s earlier statement. “With insight, it’s true that the way we balanced [Human Revolution] favoured stealth over combat. But that was never our intention. It

happened for several reasons that we now understand today. So we expanded the flexibility [of] augmentations,” he continues. “We’re also rebalancing XP rewards in such a way that it no longer favours stealth. It all becomes about your play-style. Now, you can also be a killing machine if you want without breaking your stealth approach like in *Human Revolution*. Or the other way around: you can also spare lives while being a fighter. This time around, players should really feel they can play the way they want.”

It’s an interesting idea, and one that effectively fixes *Human Revolution*’s biggest

flaw: taking a non-lethal route through the game essentially prevented you from using its coolest gadgets. Many of the Augmentations available to Jensen now have multiple functions – serving as non-lethal variants when necessary. The Icarus Landing System, which lets Jensen survive falls from a great

height, can now also be enhanced to send out a deadly shockwave upon impact. The Icarus Dash can be used to quickly move in a flash, or it can be directed at an enemy for a devastating body slam. One of the coolest we’ve seen so far is the Typhoon Attack – which

rips the camera out to third person and lets you gleefully observe Jensen pirouetting as he sprays out mini warheads from his arms. If, on the other hand, you are going for a completely non-lethal play through, this can be adapted to spray green knock out gas instead. As Dugas says, it’s all about choice.

The inherent problem in offering such a staggering amount of opportunity to players is that it’s all for nothing if there’s no way to seize it. Just because you have the tools to do whatever you want, if you’ve got no way to appropriately utilise them, then all these flashy abilities are for nothing but show. ▶

“You’ll notice there’s more verticality, more ways to explore the level”

✦ Level design is king, with every area offering multiple routes and paths to complete your goal.

✦ You’ll have multiple ways to take on enemies in *Mankind Divided*; lethal or non-lethal, it’s up to you.

THE POWER PLAYERS

MEET THE OTHER MAJOR CHARACTERS YOU’LL FIND IN *MANKIND DIVIDED*

NAME: Alex Vega

AFFILIATION: Juggernaut Collective

BIO: A member of the Juggernaut Collective – the group working covertly to expose the illuminati – Vega got Adam Jensen instated on Task Force 29 in an effort to scare the terrorists out of hiding.



NAME: Talos Rucker

AFFILIATION: Augmented Rights Coalition

BIO: As leader of the Augmented Rights Coalition, Rucker has been responsible for taking a non-violent approach to quelling the tide of hate directed at transhumans since the Aug incident in *Human Revolution*.



NAME: Victor Marchenko

AFFILIATION: Augmented Rights Coalition

BIO: Marchenko doesn’t seem best pleased with Talos Rucker’s non-violent approach to conflict resolution, and it looks like he might be emerging as one of the leading villains in *Mankind Divided*.



NAME: Jim Miller

AFFILIATION: Task Force 29

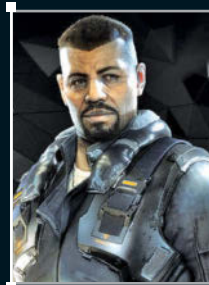
BIO: Miller is the director of Task Force 29, the unit put together to try and tackle the rise in terrorism following the Aug Incident. Though Miller is beginning to question whether the whole department is an illuminati front.



NAME: Elias Chikane

AFFILIATION: Task Force 29

BIO: A highly skilled pilot who is on the frontlines of the war against the aggressive tactics adopted by the ARC. Chikane has developed a dislike and suspicion of augmented humans, which means his relationship with Jensen is likely to be volatile.



▶ Eidos understands this and, in fact, it's delivering a game world so rich and bountiful in freedom that we're left wondering whether it's all a clever mirage. But it isn't – it's real. Thanks to the power of the Xbox One, not to mention a desire internally at Eidos to push boundaries, *Mankind Divided* is set to change what we believe is possible in an emergent sandbox. While *Human Revolution* was often constrained by its engine, the all-new Dawn Engine sets *Mankind Divided* free.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

"We have more memory available; we're able to push the size of our levels," says Proulx.

"Memory management was a big challenge on the previous consoles, but now when you enter a level, straight away you'll notice there's more verticality, more ways to explore the level. That – in a *Deus Ex* game – is incredibly important because that means we can give more complex options to the player.

"The design team is having more fun, because of that. There's also the richness in the graphics, too: I'm not just talking about how many polygons in the sofa," he chuckles. "I'm talking about the amount of objects and detail we can create. So, you enter a room and you see it's full of objects and clutter – we love the player to explore that, to look around, and see all the storytelling elements, the 'show don't tell' in art direction."

This is only possible because Eidos made the potentially risky decision to not go completely open world. With so many other titles making the leap – *MGS* and *The Witcher* to name two – *Mankind Divided* risked looking cramped and outdated. Thankfully, this couldn't be further from the truth. It has allowed Eidos to meticulously craft its game worlds, giving players the opportunity

to explore and run wild. As Proulx tells us, "Everything in our game is hand-crafted, and when you have a big open world, you can't create that amount of detail – it's impossible."

Two of the open-ended hub zones revealed so far – Golem City and the Dvali Theatre in Prague – are testaments to this philosophy. It's here where all the upgrades, revisions and refinements to the mechanics and systems within the game all come together to look like magic in motion. The fun to be had in *Mankind Divided* almost requires

you to rewire the way you think about games. Instead of thinking 'What will the game let me do?' when approaching a new situation, you should be thinking 'How can I try and break it into doing what I want to do?' Eidos has designed seemingly every inch of the sequel with multiple gameplay options and routes – not to mention various combat opportunities and avoidance tactics – available at all times. More often than not, you'll need to get creative with the augmented tools at your disposal to really see what the game can do.

"One of the challenges we face [with *Mankind Divided*] is offering the player a lot of options – but that's how we want to develop it. Even in life you might face this kind of challenge, though, right? You go to the supermarket and you can be overwhelmed by options, it can be stressful, but you persevere. So we persevere," jokes Proulx. "We let the players know they can do what they want with the mechanics on offer..."

As you progress and you customise your own Adam Jensen you're going to have a completely different experience to anyone else, and that's really cool. There are a lot of mechanics and content that players are never going to see or experience, but that's what makes our games unique and important."

Imagine a hypothetical *Deus Ex* encounter, if you will. Jensen has just crawled out of a vent (because there's always a bloody vent) and crawls into cover behind a car as rain thunders down across the neon lit streets

unfolding in front of him, leading towards a building that needs to be infiltrated. Bipedal robots stalk the area along with an array of heavily armed guards. Want to use combat? Strap on the Titan Shield, your biggest weapons and try to walk straight through the front door. If you want to be a smartarse, maybe you take a

ladder and try and enter via a skylight. Maybe you'd rather stack a few crates up and try to get to the roof, using camo and quick dashes to bypass the snipers – looking for weak structures to break through with your mechanical fists along the way. You could hack the guard robots and let them cause chaos, a perfect distraction for you to get the drop on unsuspecting enemies. Maybe you do something the developer never even considered. That's the beauty of *Mankind Divided*, you are truly free to tackle it in any way you see fit – there is no wrong way to play – and that's frighteningly liberating. ✕

"Our goal has always been to let players play the way they want to play, whether it was combat or stealth"

THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS

WEAPON CUSTOMISATION GIVES YOU THE ABILITY TO TAILOR YOUR WEAPONS TO ANY SITUATION



FIREWALL



07.43

BREACH CAMERA

✖ Changes to the hacking mini-game make it easy to use your hacking tools. Everything is your weapon.

✖ Jensen is back, and super powerful. Good thing, too, considering he already failed to save the world.

✖ Using your augmentations is also easier than ever in *Mankind Divided*; five can be hotkeyed on the controller.

XBOX ONE TAKES CONTROL

XBOX ONE



TAKES CONTROL

HERE WE GO AGAIN. IT'S TIME TO UPDATE

Your Xbox One has just levelled up in the console war. As great as the exclusives, Game Preview Programme and Xbox Live service have been over the two years since the system launched, we doubt anyone is going to sit there and defend the first iteration of the dashboard. This is something you've probably had to battle against every time you turn on your console, and that's why we are getting a new Xbox One experience. As far as user interfaces go, what

we're dealing with now isn't quite as ugly as the Xbox 360 launch Blades – but it isn't nearly as intuitive as the dash that Windows 10 users are enjoying right now. But that's about to change. It's time to update: the new Xbox One experience is here. All of the basic functions of your console have changed – from sending and receiving messages, to interacting with the Activity Feed and browsing the store. But worry not, **X-ONE** is here to guide you through the redesigned dashboard and all of its lovely new features.

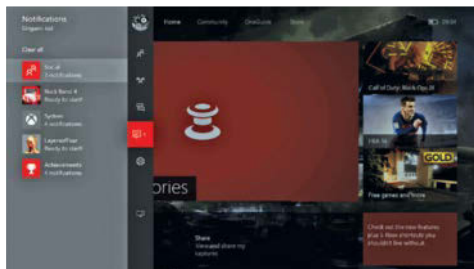
NEW XBOX ONE EXPERIENCE IN BRIEF

GET YOUR FIRST LOOK AT THE NEW DASHBOARD



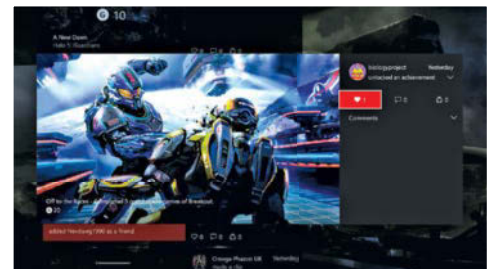
REDESIGNED GUIDE

A brand new Guide lets you quickly access your Xbox One essentials with just a button press, meaning you no longer have to waste time weaving in and out of all of your apps. From here you can quickly access Friends, start a Party, get to Settings, view Notifications and plenty more.



COMMUNITY FOCUSED

A new Community section has been added, making the console even more socially oriented than before. This tab is designed and optimised to help you easily connect with your friends and other Xbox Live users and keep track of their Activity, Achievements and Uploads.



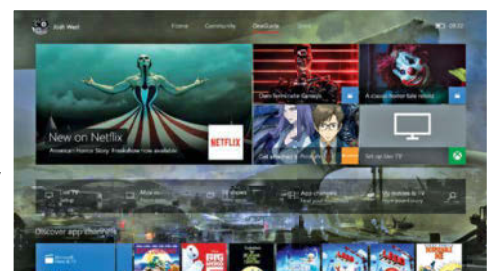
INTRODUCING GAME HUB

Front and centre on the dashboard is access to Game Hubs for games you've recently played. Not only will you be able to see which of your friends are playing the same games as you, but you'll be able to quickly share your Achievements and clips out to the world.



REVAMPED ONEGUIDE

OneGuide has been revamped, letting you see a list of TV shows with the most viewers at any moment on Xbox, while listings will now come up instantly. You'll also be able to use picture-in-picture to browse for other things to watch without missing what's happening in your show.



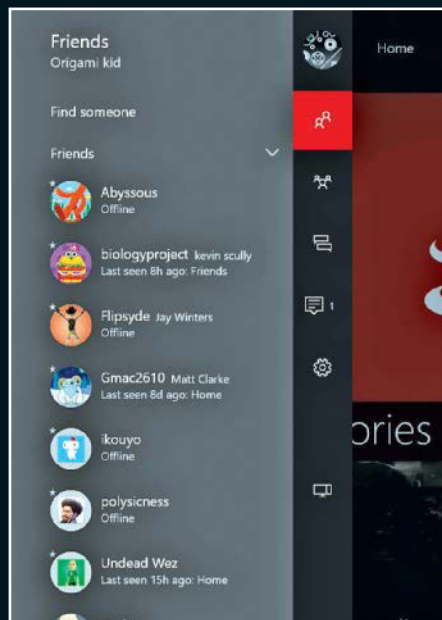
ACCESSING THE NEW GUIDE

MICROSOFT HAS BEEN PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU DO ON YOUR XBOX ONE AND HOW YOU DO IT, THAT'S WHY THE TOP TASKS HAVE BEEN STREAMLINED. ACCESSING THE REDESIGNED GUIDE IS NOW SUPER EASY. JUST DOUBLE-TAP THE XBOX BUTTON - OR PRESS LEFT IF YOU'RE ON THE HOME SCREEN - AND IT WILL INSTANTLY OVERLAY



FRIENDS

This is the new way to interact with your friends. Microsoft realised that having to drop into a separate App just to see what your buddies were up to was a complete nightmare, and so this tab will now let you see what your Friends and Followers are doing, as well as letting you quickly start up a Party.



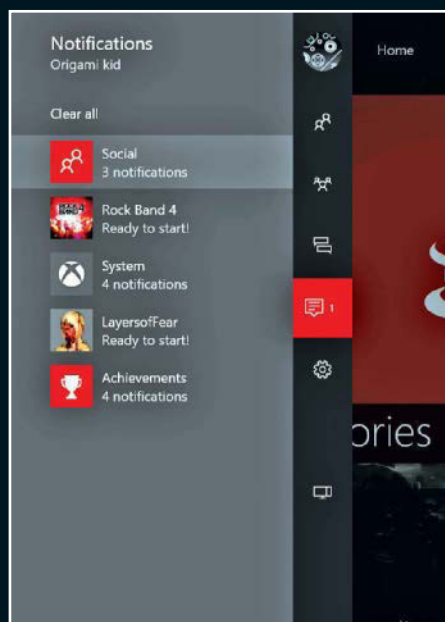
PARTIES

If you want to start a large group gathering, the dedicated Party tab is the best way to do it. It is here that you will be able to invite people en masse, manage permissions, mute any particular individuals that are causing you trouble and, of course, invite all your pals into a game lobby.



NOTIFICATIONS

The new Notifications tab will not only ensure that you never miss a message or game invite again, but it also lets you respond to messages quickly and efficiently. You'll also be able to quickly access your latest screenshots and game clips here. Basically, this is the new hub of the experience.



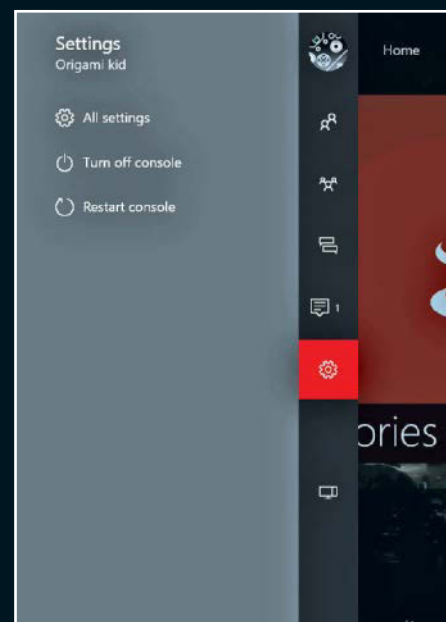
MESSAGES

The Messages tab is currently the place to be if you want to send text and/or voice messages to people over Xbox Live, at least until Cortana launches. For the time being, not only will you be able to send voice and text messages, but you'll also be able to translate voice messages to text.



SETTINGS

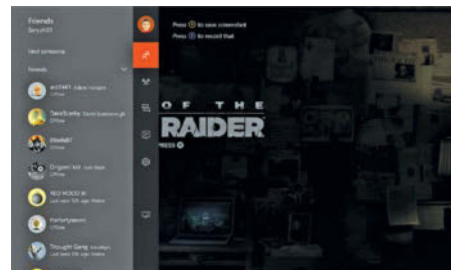
The Settings tab is an interesting one; while you can get quick access to the full app, you will also be able to alter basic settings such as game audio and voice chat levels. We hope this is expanded in the future to let users customise which options appear here, though. We want to make it really feel like our own.



PARTY STARTER

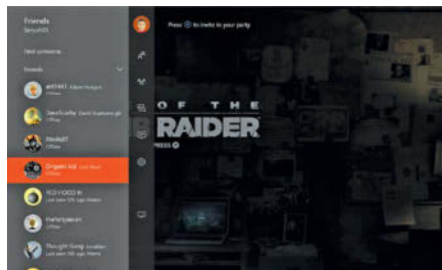
HOW TO START A PARTY WHILE IN A GAME

1: UNINTERRUPTED ACCESS



While in-game, all you'll need to do is double-tap the Xbox button, which will overlay the new Guide without scaling the game down, like Snap used to do.

2: USE QUICK MENU



Thanks to the new Guide layout, you'll be able to navigate to the Friends tab quickly and simply press the Invite To Party option in the menu.

3: SELECT FRIENDS



Just scroll through the menu, select which friends you want to invite to the Party and it's a job done. A single button press is all you need now.

4: WAITING GAME

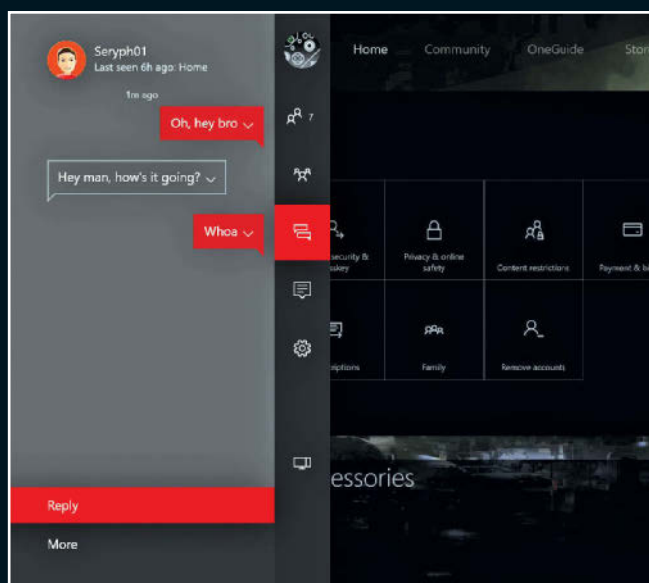


At this point, all you need to do is wait for your friends to accept. Buddies will also be able to join your game in progress from the Friends tab too.

MESSAGING MADE EASY

RESPONDING TO FRIENDS IS EASIER THAN EVER

Thank god this has been introduced. When a friend sends you a message, be it voice or text, you now no longer need to wait for the App to snap in and load the message. Instead, you can hold the Xbox button as the notification pops up, it'll overlay the Guide over whatever you're doing and you'll be able to see it right there in the Notification tab. From here, you can either type out a response or use a chat headset to record a quick voice message. This will be upgraded towards the end of the year when Cortana support is introduced.



PLAY YOUR BACK CATALOGUE

THE MOST REQUESTED XBOX ONE FEATURE ARRIVES WITH THE NEW XBOX ONE EXPERIENCE

Even though the Xbox One has a pretty fantastic library of games, sometimes nothing beats returning to an old classic. As you update to the new dashboard, you'll find that many of your Xbox One digital games will already be waiting in My Games and Apps ready to be downloaded again for free. If you happen to still own any of these titles (and future games that are added to the service) then you should be able to just pop them into the Blu-ray drive and get going.

There are 104 titles available when the new dashboard launches, and this is going to be updated on a monthly basis moving forward. From November, you'll also find that Games With Gold has been updated, allowing you to pick up the Xbox 360 free games as well. That means, in essence, you're going to get three to four games through GWG every month from the foreseeable future.

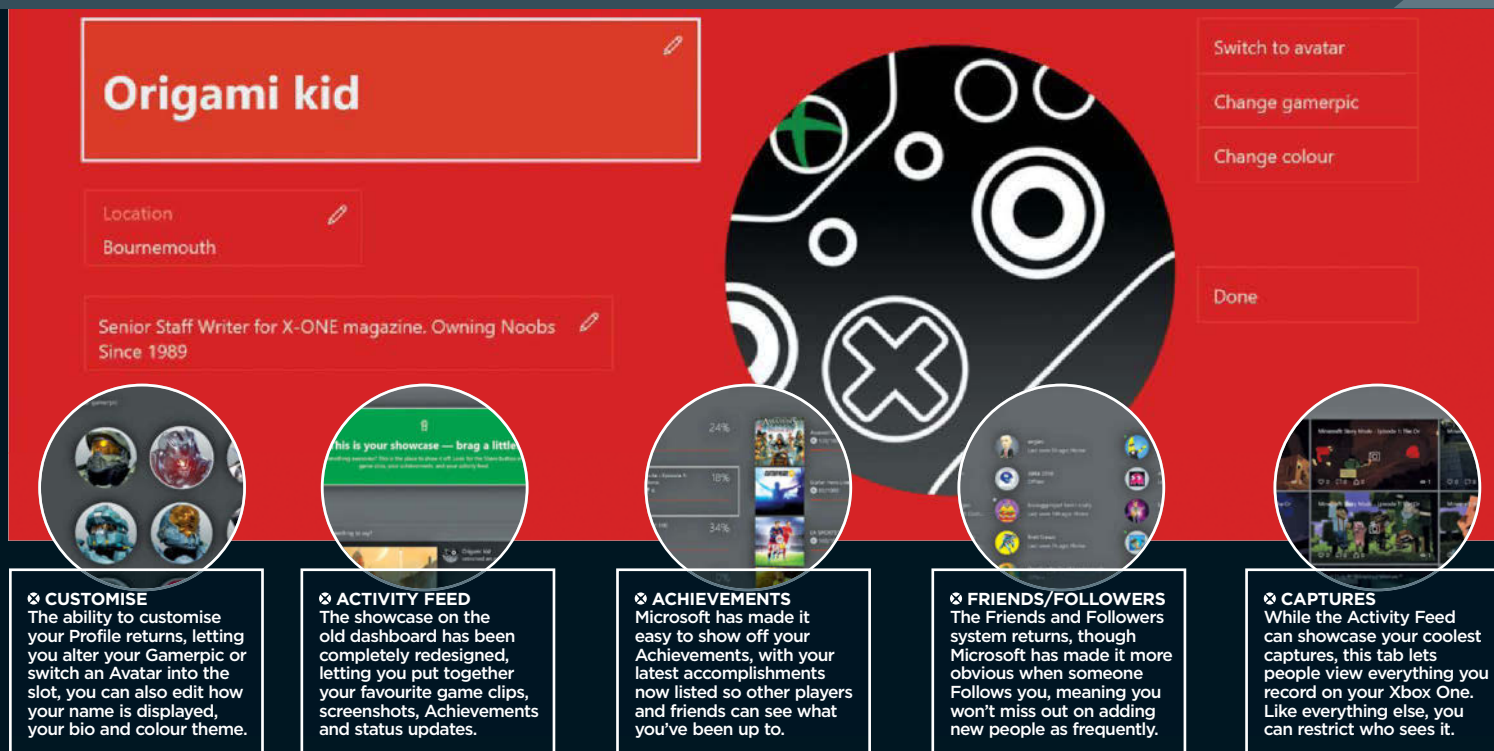


OUR PICK OF 360 TITLES

Alien Hominid	Ikaruga
Assassin's Creed II	Just Cause 2
Banjo-Kazooie	Kameo
Banjo-Tooie	Mass Effect
Beyond Good & Evil HD	Mirror's Edge
Borderlands	N+
Castle Crashers	Perfect Dark
Defense Grid	Perfect Dark Zero
Doom II	Rainbow Six Vegas 2
Fable	Sonic The Hedgehog
Fallout 3	South Park: The Stick of Truth
Gears Of War 1-3	Super Meat Boy
Geometry Wars Evolved	Viva Piñata
Halo: Spartan Assault	

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW PROFILE

THE HOME OF YOUR XBOX ONE

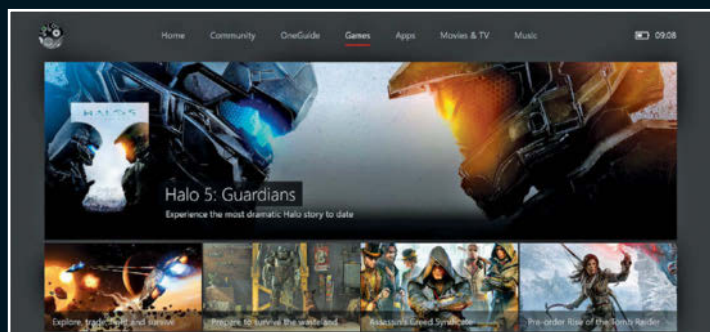


The screenshot shows the Xbox One profile page for a user named 'Origami kid'. The profile includes a location of 'Bournemouth', a bio stating 'Senior Staff Writer for X-ONE magazine. Owing Noots Since 1989', and a large circular avatar with a black and white geometric pattern. To the right of the profile are three buttons: 'Switch to avatar', 'Change gamerpic', and 'Change colour', followed by a 'Done' button. Below the profile are five circular icons representing different features: Customise, Activity Feed, Achievements, Friends/Followers, and Captures. Each icon is accompanied by a brief description of the feature.

- CUSTOMISE**
The ability to customise your Profile returns, letting you alter your Gamerpic or switch an Avatar into the slot, you can also edit how your name is displayed, your bio and colour theme.
- ACTIVITY FEED**
The showcase on the old dashboard has been completely redesigned, letting you put together your favourite game clips, screenshots, Achievements and status updates.
- ACHIEVEMENTS**
Microsoft has made it easy to show off your Achievements, with your latest accomplishments now listed so other players and friends can see what you've been up to.
- FRIENDS/FOLLOWERS**
The Friends and Followers system returns, though Microsoft has made it more obvious when someone Follows you, meaning you won't miss out on adding new people as frequently.
- CAPTURES**
While the Activity Feed can showcase your coolest captures, this tab lets people view everything you record on your Xbox One. Like everything else, you can restrict who sees it.

STOREFRONT

NO MORE GETTING LOST IN MENUS



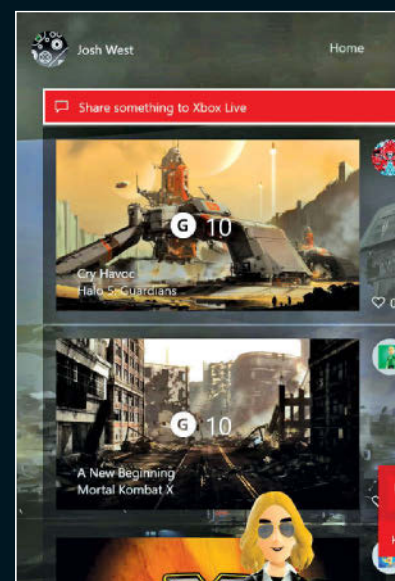
One of Microsoft's biggest pushes on Xbox One was to have all games accessed from the same storefront, putting the same weighting on triple-A and ID@Xbox releases. A great idea, though the storefront was messy and difficult to navigate. The new dashboard has seen the Game, Video and

Music storefronts get a gigantic redesign, ensuring that you can get to the content that you want, without wasting time using Bing or crawling through menus. It's a small but integral change that makes the entire user experience – from desire to purchase – less of a pain in the ass.

COMMUNITY DRIVEN

KEEP AN EYE ON WHAT YOUR FRIENDS ARE UP TO

The Community tab on the dashboard is designed to give you a new way to keep up with what your Friends and Followers are up to. Not only will the Activity Feed display recent Achievements, Captures and status updates, but you'll also now be able to comment, like and share your content immediately. At launch, this page will also display a Trending tab, showing content from some of the biggest players in the Live and eSports scene. It's the place to check out if you want to get social on your Xbox One.



THE RETURN OF AVATARS

Microsoft is bringing back Avatars in a big way. While you've always been able to set your Avatar as a Gamerpic, it looks like a full suite of customisation and options is going to make a return. While it hasn't been introduced just yet, we expect to see the Avatar storefront come back. For now, head into Profile and hit the Edit button to make a basic new one.



TAKING CONTROL

INTRODUCING THE XBOX ONE ELITE CONTROLLER

✕ UNDER THE THUMB

The sensitivity of the thumbsticks can be totally tweaked, ensuring the resistance and dead centre is perfectly fine-tuned to how you like to play.

✕ REDESIGNED CROSS-BAR

Traditionally, the D-pad on Xbox controllers has been pretty weak, which is why it's great to see a more sensitive, multi-directional cross-bar introduced.

✕ MORE CONTROL

These little buttons hiding on the back of the gamepad give you even more control over your experience, perfect for FPS and RPG games.

✕ THE PADDLES

The paddles on the back of the controller can be switched out - like everything else - though they are great for enhancing racing games, replicating realistic paddle gear shifts.

HOW TO REMAP BUTTONS

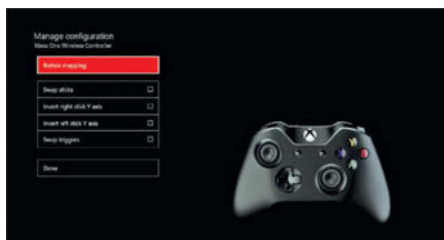
THANKS TO THE ELITE CONTROLLER, YOU CAN NOW REMAP BUTTONS ON ANY XBOX ONE CONTROLLER ACCESSORY

1: HEAD TO SETTINGS



To get started you'll want to navigate into Settings - either via the top tabs or by double tapping the Xbox button and using the new Guide. Once there, head towards the Kinect & Devices option to get started.

2: CHOOSE YOUR DEVICE



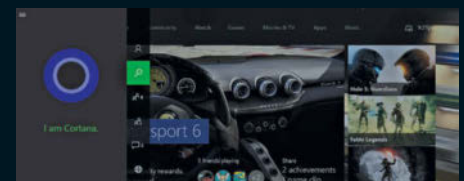
Once you've selected your device you'll be able to do simple changes, such as making your controller permanently southpaw, or head into button mapping to make more intricate changes.

3: GET TECH



Here you can remap the entire gamepad. While this is designed for the Elite controller, this can work wonders for a regular pad if you're more accustomed to different button placements.

INTRODUCING CORTANA



For those of you still rocking Kinect, you'll be pleased to know it's become more integrated with the system than ever. Dubbed Cortana, the console will now have Siri-like support, letting you use verbal commands to control every aspect of your system. While it won't launch until the end of 2015, Cortana will let you issue commands while playing games - responding to nuanced queries, such as detecting whether certain friends are online - and even supports voice dictation for those times you're feeling too lazy to send a text message to someone over Live. The scope for Cortana support to expand over time is huge, though only time will tell if its integration with apps and online services like Internet Explorer will be better than the disappointing service that was attached to the old dashboard.

FAR CRY

PRIMAL

Words Stephen Ashby

UBISOFT GOES
PREHISTORIC WITH
ITS BACK-TO-BASICS
ADVENTURE...

We're used to games stacking the odds against you. An army against one rebel. A city that needs liberating by one hero.

A single soldier taking on a universe full of nasty aliens. But in all of these you've got the edge; a big-ass gun, a unique piece of technology, or a team at your back. *Far Cry* never bothered with that; you get dropped into a shitstorm and it's up to you to survive. And in *Far Cry Primal*, that's going to be harder than ever, because this time around there isn't a bullet in sight.

GOING NATIVE

"Maybe there's this idea that we have all these *Far Cry*s planned, but the reality is, at the end of each *Far Cry* we sort of think to ourselves 'Where do we want to go next?'" explains Dan Hay, executive producer. "A team came to us and basically said 'We have an idea for *Far Cry*'. So they sat us down and they talked about the idea of a *Far Cry* that was primordial, that took place at the beginning of time, the beginning of mankind."

Ubisoft couldn't be going back to basics any more than it is with *Primal*. Gone are the guns, the cars, the helicopters and the purple-suited baddies. In are loincloths, spears, and giant, terrifying mammoths. The game takes place 12,000 years ago, meaning even language may be a barrier. But, as with any *Far Cry* title, the biggest danger comes from nature itself.

"I think all *Far Cry* games are about survival," says narrative director Jean-Sébastien Decant. "They're about survival at first, and then it's about going from being the hunted to the hunter. When Takkar arrives to Oros he is exhausted, he's lost everyone, he is alone, he has no weapons, and he finds himself in a place where actually you don't know if beasts or men are the most dangerous."

The Takkar that Decant is talking about is you. You'll take on the role of this survivor when the game hits Xbox One in February, and you won't be in good shape. The ancient man is the sole survivor of an ambush on his hunting group, and while seemingly everything in the fictional Oros is trying to kill him, he must fight, hunt and form his own tribe in order to survive. We have to admit,

✂ As with the previous *Far Cry* titles, taking down enemy strongholds will be a big part of the game – silently is always the safest way.

while the setting is a little different, it does sound like classic *Far Cry* – especially with the crafting at the core of the game. Takkar will need to arm himself against the dangers of the world, with spears, axes and, of course, a trusty bow.

WORKING WITH TOOLS

“The idea is that you don’t buy your weapons; you make them,” explains Thomas Simon, game director. “At the beginning you have to find wood and stone and start making your first weapons. Little by little, players will find more resources to make increasingly stronger weapons.”

Oh, Thomas, you make it sound so easy. In actual fact, these resources are animal bones, furs and feathers. Stone will only get you so far

in this prehistoric land, so finding new, stronger materials and crafting them into deadly weapons is the only way to stay alive. Of course, the animals themselves may have a little something to say about you killing them and harvesting their remains... So far we’ve seen only a small number of the many animals we’ll be encountering come February. The most common so far (as you can probably tell from these screenshots) are the mammoths, which appear to be one of the more difficult-to-kill animals, as they move in herds and, well, they’ve got huge freaking tusks. However, there are more deadly creatures than that in Oros – including sabre-toothed tigers, grizzly bears (classic *Far Cry*) and what looks like a pointier rhinoceros. ▶



“It’s a really huge world, but it’s also really dense, with loads of activities, and animals, and humans busy hunting...”



FAR CRY PRIMAL

Well, it wouldn't be a *Far Cry* game without a menagerie of deadly beasts running about the place, trying to eat your face. We expected nothing less – although the lack of dinosaurs is definitely disappointing. Imagine taming a Triceratops and storming into an enemy village riding on its back! That's the dream, people. We managed to jump onto an elephant in *Far Cry 4*, so is that too much to ask? Oh, and we wouldn't mind a pet sabre-tooth, either...

DAY BECOMES NIGHT

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. You know the *Far Cry* system – it'll be *hours* of gameplay before we're strong enough to take on a creature as deadly as a tiger.

And they'll be the least of our worries in the first few hours anyway, because night brings a different set of problems...

"It's a really huge world, but it's also really dense, with loads of activities, and animals, and humans busy hunting," says Simon. "As day becomes night, things change – predators come out and the prey goes to sleep. Players are in the thick of it; each time of day has its surprises. That's what we like."

We've only seen a little of the night-time sections, but it already looks like a completely different game. Fire becomes essential to survival, and without a torch you're as good as dead. You'll

"Gone are the guns, cars, helicopters. In are loincloths, spears, and mammoths"

be able to light some weapons on fire to deal more damage, but at night your best friend will be shelter. If you think it's all starting to sound a little like *Minecraft* – with its crafting, adventuring, night-time hiding and hunting – you're on the same track as us. This is no bad thing, especially if there is an engaging story – something vanilla *Minecraft* still lacks. But we're a little concerned about how much longevity the gameplay will actually have.

In most *Far Cry* games, there's a desire to push forward to unlock new weapons. You can fly, you can snipe from a distance, and you can travel quickly by jumping in cars. Will the world for *Primal* be as big as *Far Cry 4*? If so, traversing it

may become a chore. And if not – if it's more dense – will there be enough variety?

A spear can only get so advanced in the Mesolithic period, right? It's not like you'll ever be strapping rockets to it. We're hoping that Ubi can find that feeling of progression that we've

had in previous games, whether it's in the mystical mumbo jumbo that's bound to be involved, or if it's just in an ability to gain near-super abilities (like slowing down time, or using the bow from a huge distance). But even with this progression, this feeling of becoming more powerful the further in you get, we're concerned about limitations.

BIG BAD

Thankfully, *Far Cry* usually has one excellent component: its villain. *Far Cry 3* gave us the alarmingly unhinged Vaas; *Far Cry 4* offered us the deadly Pagan Min, a baddie so bad that the ending of the game really left us torn (no spoilers). If there's one thing that can make *Primal* truly memorable it will be the villain of the piece. So far, it seems that the majority of the conversation will take place in ancient language – it would be a little odd if every Mesolithic human had a drawling American accent, after all – meaning there might be a lot of reading involved for those looking for



story. But with the game focusing on storming strongholds and taking control of the game world, like previous *Far Cry* titles, it's likely that there will be a head honcho calling the shots. If Ubi gets this right, it could be all the motivation we need.

There's potential here, and it's great to see a studio taking a series in a completely new direction like this. Will it work? We'll know soon – the game is due for release on 23 February 2016. Expect some hands-on time very soon indeed. ✕



✕ If the *Ice Age* movie franchise has taught us anything it's that mammoths just need love. Put that bow down and give it a hug.

THE WORLD OR OROS

NEW DIRECTION,
SAME OLD FOREST

Okay, maybe that's a little unfair. *Far Cry* has always had beautiful environments to explore, and the Mesolithic era presents the game designers with a new set of challenges. "Oros is a wild, primitive world. It's a cornucopia," says Thomas Simon, *Far Cry Primal's* game director. "An ancient glacier melted at the end of the Ice Age and became a super fertile valley with very different ecosystems where a huge number of animals now live, including large predators and massive plant-eaters."

For the first time in a *Far Cry* title, the animals that are being designed don't have real-life counterparts to build models from. Instead, the designers have had to use fossils and ancient artefacts to create their world. There are Megafauna (that's giant animals to you and me) like the mammoths everywhere, and everyone is competing for food.

But Ubisoft is taking some creative liberties with the past in order to make a game that will actually be fun to play. There's no point just having your character die of a common cold three hours after you start the story, after all. "What's 'primal'? How do we get back to our roots?" wonders Jean Sébastien Decant, narrative director. "All the organic remains have disappeared. What did they wear? Did they use leather? We don't know. What remains are rocks and bones. So, for me, it was very interesting because we actually had great grey areas that we could dive into."

We know Ubisoft - it isn't exactly a bastion of historical accuracy. Even in titles like *Assassin's Creed*, real history is more of a guideline. And we've never expected proper realism from *Far Cry*, which revels in magic, herbal remedies and taking down elephants with tuk-tuks. Nothing has changed here - with so little known about the prehistoric age, this will be Ubisoft's version of the Mesolithic period, and as long as it's full of stuff to kill, that's fine by us.

✂ There's no word on multiplayer yet, but much of the trailer showed three of four characters working together. Will co-op return?

YOUR PREHISTORIC ARSENAL



BOW & ARROW

Bows have been a big part of modern *Far Cry* games, but in *Primal* it looks like the weapon will be the go-to choice for long-distance or close-up kills.



SPEAR

We've seen these being used to take down mammoths, and it looks like they'll do a lot more damage than the bow - but you can only carry so many.



TORCH

Fire will be an essential tool in your arsenal, especially when darkness falls. Use this to light other weapons (like your arrows) on fire and damage larger areas.



AXE

We haven't seen much axe action yet, but it'd be odd for a prehistoric title not to include this sort of weapon. Prepare to chop wood and people in equal measure.



ANIMALS

So far we've only seen animals as enemies, but in *Far Cry 4* you could ride an elephant so we're crossing our fingers and toes for mammoth-riding.

SAVE UP TO 50% ON A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION THIS CHRISTMAS*



JUST
£29.99

12 ISSUES, SAVE 50%

ORDER HOTLINE 0844 856 0644**

ONLINE AT www.imaginesubs.co.uk/xmas151



GADGET
Packed with the latest, coolest and most exciting tech
12 issues, save 50%



HOW IT WORKS
The action-packed science and technology magazine
13 issues, save 46%



ALL ABOUT HISTORY
Bringing history to life for the whole family
13 issues, save 49%



HISTORY OF WAR
The stories, strategies, heroes and machines of historic conflicts
12 issues, save 50%



DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHER
Inspiration, tutorials and tools for enthusiasts and professionals
12 issues, save 50%



RETRO GAMER
The number one magazine for classic gaming
12 issues, save 50%



ALL ABOUT SPACE
Discover the wonders of the solar system and beyond
13 issues, save 49%



WORLD OF ANIMALS
Everything you need to know about the world's most amazing wildlife.
13 issues, save 42%

SUBSCRIBE TO ANY MAGAZINE FOR JUST **£29.99**

- * Exclusive **Christmas offer**
- * Save **up to 50%** on the shop price*
- * Never miss an issue of your **favourite magazine**
- * **Free delivery**, direct to your door
- * **Ideal Christmas gift** - that lasts all year!
- * **Free e-card** to send when you buy as a gift

BUY AS A GIFT OR TREAT YOURSELF!

Use code **XMAS151** for this extra-special price.

Order by **2nd December** to start your subscription the first issue after Christmas.

** Calls will cost 7p per minute plus your telephone company's access charge.

BY POST

Send your completed form to:
Imagine Subscriptions, 800 Guillat Avenue,
Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8GU

YOUR DETAILS

Title _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Country _____

Telephone number _____

Mobile number _____

Email address _____

This subscription is ☐ for me ☐ a gift

DELIVERY DETAILS (IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE)

Title _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Country _____

Telephone number _____

PAYMENT DETAILS

UK £29.99 Magazine name _____

FOR MULTIPLE ORDERS PLEASE CALL THE ORDER
HOTLINE **0844 856 0644****

CHEQUE

☐ I enclose a cheque for £ _____

(made payable to Imagine Publishing Ltd)

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro

Card number

Expiry date

Issue number (Maestro)

Signed _____

Date _____

All subscribers receive a monthly e-newsletter of news and offers.

Please tick if you would prefer not to receive any promotional material from Imagine Publishing:

by post ☐ by telephone ☐ by email ☐

Please tick if you would prefer not to receive any promotional material from other companies

by post ☐ by telephone ☐ by email ☐

Please tick if you DO wish to receive such information by email ☐

TERMS & CONDITIONS

* Titles are priced at £29.99 saving up to 50% on the shop price. For the full list of titles and issue details please visit www.imaginesubs.co.uk/XMAS151. This is a UK-only offer, for overseas offers please visit www.imaginesubs.co.uk/XMAS151 or call +44 (0)1795 592 869. Gift subscriptions ordered by 2nd December will begin with the first issue on sale January 2015 – orders after this date will start with the following issue. You have the option of sending a digital gift card so please include your email address in the form above. Non-gift subscriptions will start with the next available issue.

Offer ends 31st December 2015. Promo code XMAS151

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bethesda
Softworks

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Wasteland
survival
simulation

PLAYERS
1

PRICE
£49.99/\$59.99

DLC
Yes

**ACHIEVEMENT
DIFFICULTY**
Moderate

**NEED TO
UNLOCK**
Legend Of The
Wastes (50G)

IN BRIEF

After 200 years on ice, you emerge from a Vault ready to kick some ass, explore a giant wasteland and find your son before the horrors of irradiated Boston consume him.

FALLOUT 4

www.fallout4.com /Fallout @Fallout

Searching for signs of life at the end of the world



What is it that makes *Fallout* so unrelentingly captivating? What aspect of it compels us to spend hundreds of hours wandering through a wasteland; staring into the endless abyss of washed-out environments, wrist-mounted menus and discarded American dreams? Seriously, *Fallout* has to be the only game series on the planet that can so easily tempt you into dedicating so much of your time and life to simply sifting through dead people's broken shit. But that's what living life at the end of the world will do to you; it'll warp you into a compulsive hoarder, potentially with murderous intent.

Can we take a quick second to talk loot before we dive into this *Fallout 4* review proper, because the looting is actually becoming a very real problem for us. Once you begin playing this game, you won't be able to walk for more than 30 seconds through Boston without spotting something to investigate. You'll hope there's ammo, a new weapon or some Caps to be found, but most of the time it's just junk. Useless junk at that, but you'll feel inclined to pick it up all the same. Like, why would you ever need to take six wrenches and 12 empty milk bottles with you out on an adventure to save your son – you just wouldn't,

“If Bethesda took as much care with QA as it did with cultivating worlds that are simply insane in scope we'd probably have the game of the century”

right? We didn't think we would either, but there we were, ten minutes into a defiant crawl back to a shantytown homestead – painfully cobbled together with the frustrating crafting system – as wrenches clanked around in the bottomless backpack. Maybe we'd need this crap for a side-quest or a gun modification later, we thought. And really we should have been thinking about the group of Super Mutants off in the distance. It wouldn't take long for them to take advantage of our kleptomania. It's okay, we'll just respawn twenty minutes back.

Where were we? Oh yeah, *Fallout 4* and the countless time vampires that litter its expansive game map. But that's it, basically. That's the magic Bethesda has once again been

able to bottle with *Fallout 4*. Is it the ridiculous sense of freedom? The dark humour, the future/past aesthetic or the staggering sense of decision and consequence that seemingly defines every part of the world around you? Maybe we just love *Fallout* because it lets us revel in death and destruction by slowing time down long enough to literally obliterate enemies with whatever junk gun we have to hand. *Fallout 4*'s strength and greatest asset, like *Fallout 3* and *New Vegas* before it, is the exhausting sense of freedom that pervades every aspect of its being.

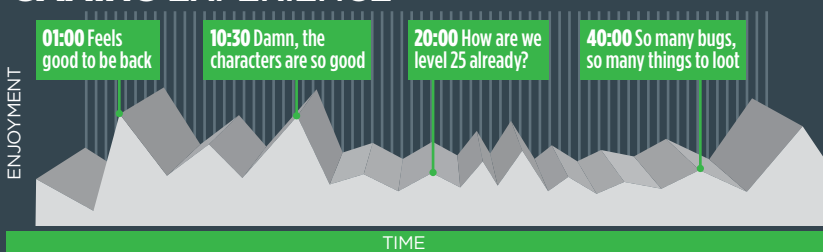
Bethesda has found great success in creating tailor-made game worlds that truly let you play in any way that you want to. Never has this design philosophy been more impressively realised than with *Fallout 4*. Were we concerned that after 40 hours of game time logged that we hadn't even touched the main quest line or veered anywhere near the main path? Not really, because we were on an absolute mission to go Vault-hunting; cracking into safes that hadn't been opened for 200 years and plundering loot that's been gathering dust since the bombs first fell.

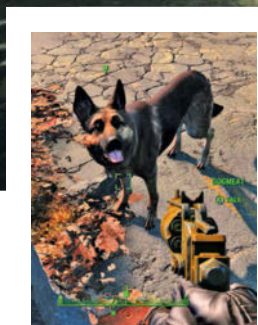
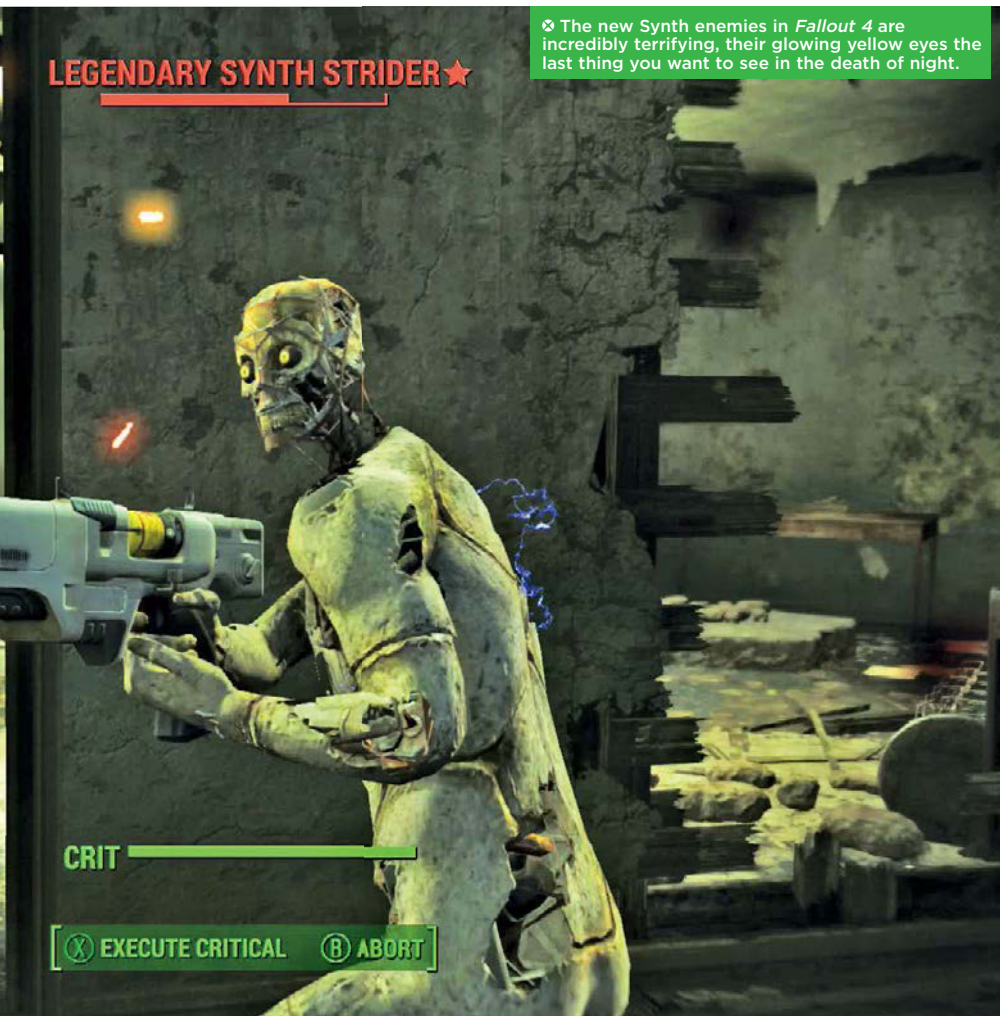
To realise this ultimate sense of freedom though, Bethesda has had to subvert the balance of power in your favour. The level cap has been removed, meaning that it isn't just feasible for you to level up every aspect of the S.P.E.C.I.A.L system to maximum ferocity early on, but it's an absolute certainty. You'll level up faster than ever too, meaning you'll quickly get your hands on all of the Perks that you want, and won't waste time accumulating the ones that you weren't bothered by just for the sake of it. Hell, *Fallout 4* sticks you in Power Armour before you've even had time to properly get your head around the changes to the VATS combat system.

In a way, these changes are necessary to supporting Bethesda's design philosophy, that of delivering true player freedom. By giving you all of the tools to let you play how you really want to, Bethesda ensures that you are rarely caught behind barriers to enjoy the game (though you might end up stuck in or through them, as an array of technical problems haunt *Fallout 4* consistently). But this power shift has subsequently stripped *Fallout*



GAMING EXPERIENCE





TRENDING

#GOODBOY

While he might be a pain to have with you, Dogmeat is the new bestest dog in videogames – sorry Riley, you’ve been replaced in our hearts

EXTENDED EXPERIENCE

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

The latest *Mad Max* movie presents an insane wasteland with some seriously weird characters, which aren't unlike those found in *Fallout 4*.

FALLOUT 3

Pre-order customers should find that *Fallout 3* is now available via Xbox One's new-found backwards compatibility.

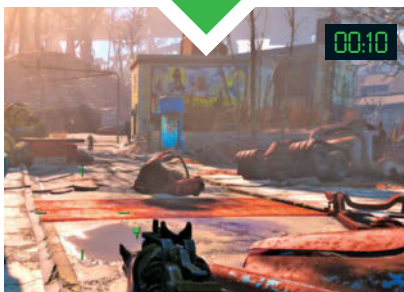
FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

The bugs have been fixed (mostly) making this well deserving of a return trip, if only to get involved in some of the mini-games.

SEQUENCE

How to crack skulls in *Fallout 4*

VATS returns and it's as awesome ever, letting you literally decimate enemies in your path



LOCATE AN ENEMY

See that Super Mutant in the distance? Get yourself ready by equipping your favourite hand gun or rifle and then close down the distance slowly.



PULL UP VATS

Next, pull up VATS to slow time down to a crawl. This will give you the chance to select body parts to blast apart. Be careful though; it doesn't stop time completely.



FOCUS ON THE HEAD

We're big fans of pumping AP into the head. Accuracy be damned; line up a few shots to blow this thing to hell. It's a brutal world out there.



SIT BACK AND SMILE

If you're lucky, you'll now be able to watch as you pump bullets into this poor bastard's noggin. When you hit on target, you'll watch it explode in slow-mo.

"Bethesda has had to subvert the balance of power in your favour to make a truly open world game"

of its character. No longer do you really feel like you are embodying a survivor out of time, trying to find their way in the wilderness, and that's in spite of *Fallout 4*'s excellent character creation system and stellar voice acting. There's less impetus on building specific characters and tailoring your weapons and gear to support your chosen play style; why would you choose between hacking and lock picking when you can do both, and have strength to back it up?

And there's no need to focus on certain types of weapons or armour any more, because a new intuitive modification system lets you tailor and overpower nearly everything in your arsenal. This means you have the freedom and tools to really explore without concern – *Fallout 4* rarely challenges past the 20-hour mark – but we found ourselves longing for the feeling of danger *Fallout 3* so easily cultivated. Should our dashing rogue really feel that his silver tongue and charisma is so easily interchangeable with a double-barrelled shotgun? We aren't so sure. No longer does *Fallout* play to your pace or adapt to whatever

ridiculous character build you've cobbled together; instead you'll quickly find yourself with all of the power – the Master Chief of the apocalypse.

The death of *Fallout*'s role-playing threads would hurt the experience more, but Bethesda has made plenty of sweeping changes to combat that make the act of actually playing *Fallout 4* an absolute delight. The studio has built on Obsidian's sterling work with *Fallout: New Vegas* in this regard; pulling your weapon into iron sights returns, while VATS no longer freezes time, giving you the opportunity to meticulously plan your brutal body crushing assault on specific Raider limbs and locations. Instead, it now simply slows it down, pressuring you into making snap decisions. It's a welcome change, and does a great job of ramping up the tension during those moments you find yourself under fire from Super Mutants, Children of the Atom and/or Deathclaws all at once, forcing you to prioritise while mutated monsters slowly close in on you.

The activation whirr of VATS is still among the most satisfying things in videogames – as is seeing an enemy's head explode in a gory slow-motion thrill-cam – and firing weapons in real time is much improved. While it isn't as good as the gunplay in the likes of *Call Of Duty: Black Ops III* or *Destiny*, for example, you no longer feel like you're desperately dependent on your stock of AP to win a firefight. It makes for a more visceral experience overall, and the refinements made here are incredibly welcomed.

BETTER ON SECOND SCREEN?

STRAP IT ON

The wearable Pip-Boy doesn't make the game easier to play, but it sure is fun having one of your own. Using a smartphone, it basically makes you feel like a wasteland wanderer, and means you spend less time staring at the in-game menus.



MICRO MANAGEMENT

With the smartphone app – regardless of whether you have the Pip-Boy – you'll be able to manage items, Perks and your status without having to waste time trawling through them on screen. It's a pretty decent second screen experience.



✖ You better set aside a few hundred hours for *Fallout 4*, it will literally consume your life.



Of course, these refinements, the insane quality of voice acting and a game world seemingly jam-packed with more to do than ever before comes at a price. The frame-rate takes a pounding on Xbox One; expect regular freezes and stutters while exploring and it to occasionally crash out while in combat entirely. There's also an insane amount of bugs to be found, none implicitly game-crippling, but sometimes they will be harder to manage than a large dose of radiation.

Perhaps most disappointing is the lack of graphical fidelity – we weren't expecting a game world on par with the likes of *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt* – but the washed-out and muddy environments do begin to grow a little tiresome, as does the pop-in and occasions textures that don't load in properly. If Bethesda took as much care with QA as it did

with cultivating worlds that are simply insane in scope we'd probably have the game of the century on our hands. Instead, we've got a sequel to *Fallout 3* that's been six years in the making. It feels incredibly familiar; there's nothing especially revolutionary about *Fallout 4*, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. There's a compulsive playability to it, and that feeling of 'just one more mission' will literally devour entire evenings and weekends out from under you.

Fallout 4 is the game we expected from Bethesda, though every so often – mostly at the times when you realise that you've just spent 20 minutes reading through inconsequential shipping reports on a hacked computer terminal while a dead Raider constantly loops in and out of a wall behind you – that maybe it could have, or should have for that matter, been more. Oh well... we think we see a shack over there just waiting to be looted. Over-encumbrance be damned, please excuse us while we strap on our Pip-Boy and indulge our new found compulsive collecting disorder; there's an entire wasteland out there to be explored after all.

✖ JOSH WEST

VERDICT

Fallout 4 is a genuine achievement, an awesome wasteland survival simulator that suffers from familiar Bethesda problems. Clear your schedule, *Fallout 4* will demand all of your spare time.

X-ONE scored **8** for *Fallout 4*

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Crystal Dynamics

GAME TYPE
3rd-person adventure

PLAYERS
1

PRICE
£49.99/\$59.99

DLC
An Endurance mode, a new tomb and a Horde mode will all be added later

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

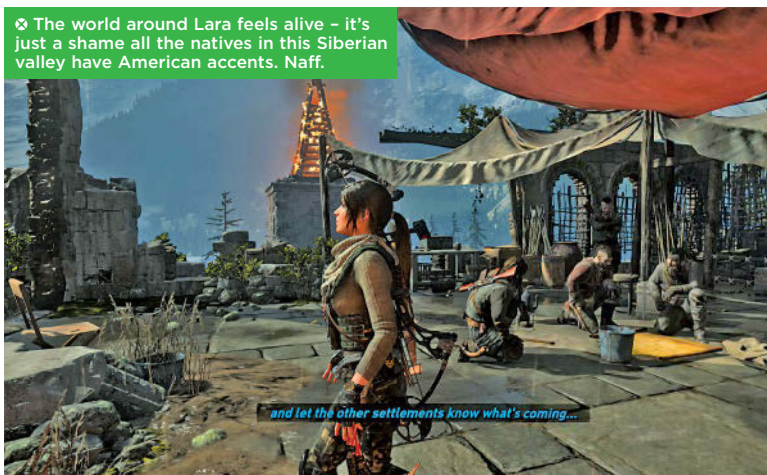
NEED TO UNLOCK
Bacon! (10G)

IN BRIEF

Lara's back, following in her father's footsteps as she attempts to find the lost city of Kitezh and the Prophet who is still rumoured to be alive there. But the evil organisation, Trinity, is trying to beat her there...

ALSO ON
XBOX 360

✗ The world around Lara feels alive - it's just a shame all the natives in this Siberian valley have American accents. Naff.

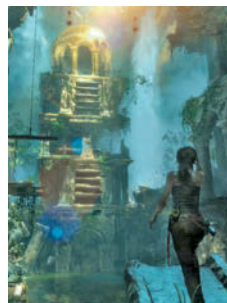
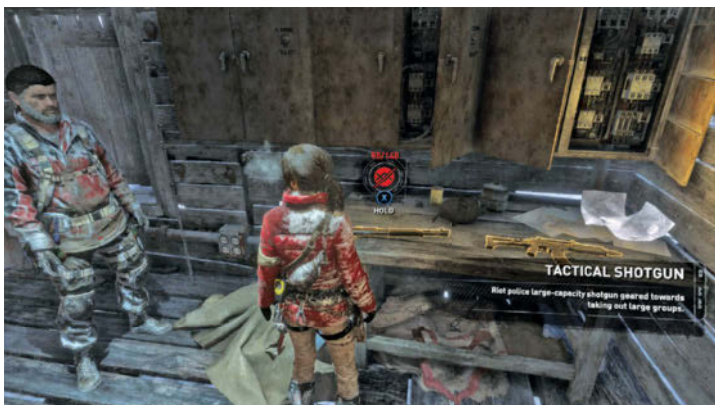
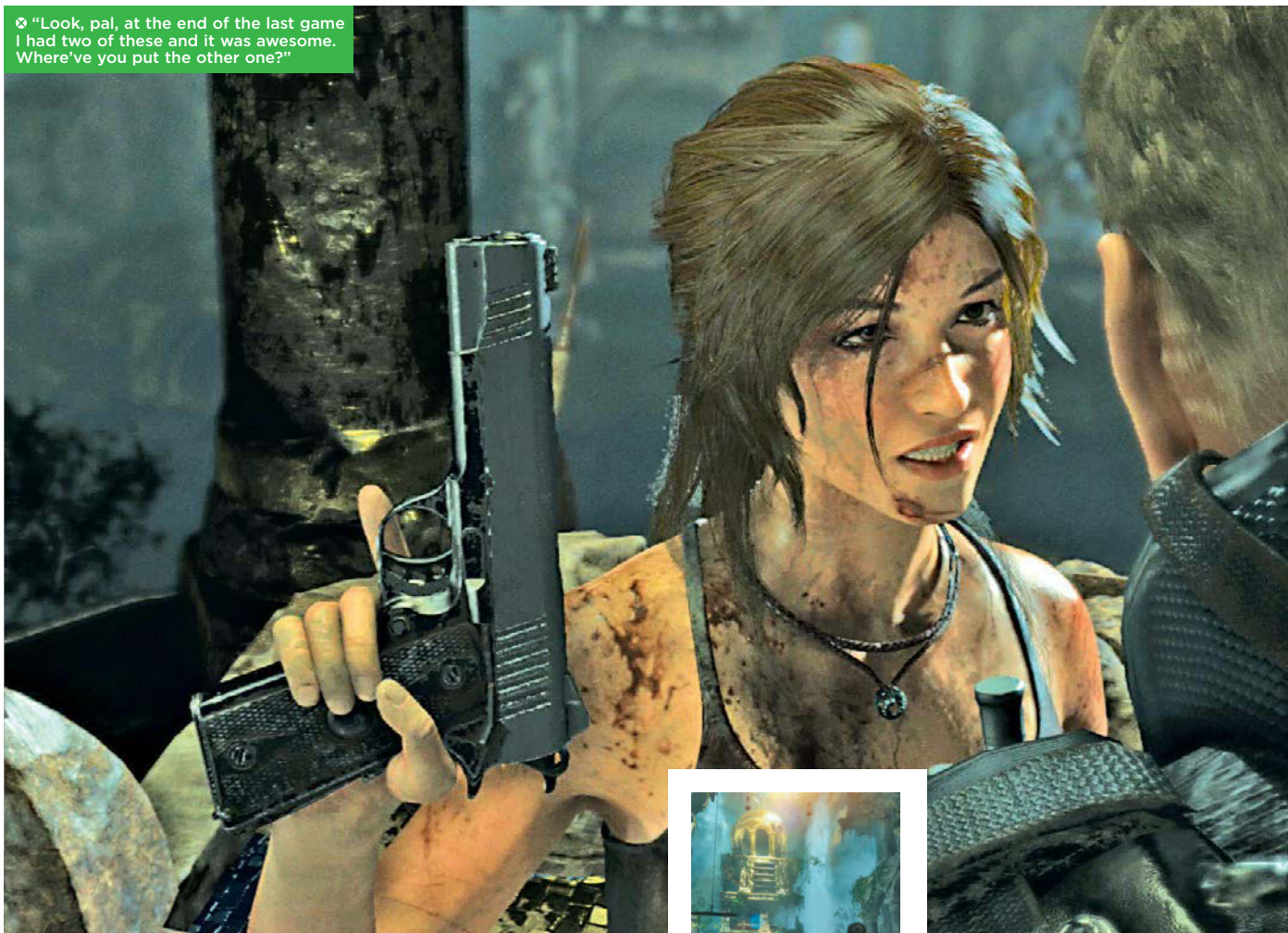


and let the other settlements know what's coming...

✗ Lara gets *super* murder in this game, but the terrible enemy AI doesn't exactly help matters.



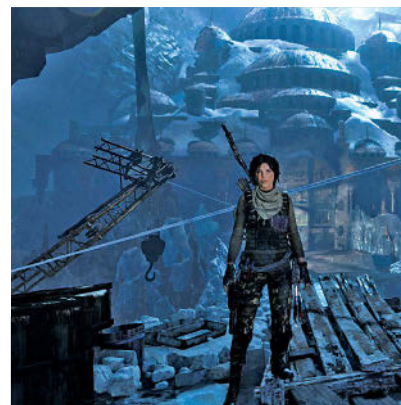
✗ "Look, pal, at the end of the last game I had two of these and it was awesome. Where've you put the other one?"



TRENDING

#LARA LOVESTOMBS

■ Tombs are back with a vengeance in *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, with more physics-based puzzles to tax your grey matter.



RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

 www.tombrainer.com  [/TombRaider](https://www.facebook.com/TombRaider)  [@TombRaider](https://twitter.com/TombRaider)

“After all, you’re a Croft”



We can finally see why Microsoft worked so hard to keep *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* as an Xbox One exclusive. The new

title takes what the 2013 series reboot did and runs with it, expanding almost every aspect of the game into an all-out, action-packed romp through dusty tombs, dripping caves and bombastic setpieces. At its best, this is probably the best game on Xbox One right now – and considering the competition that’s a big statement.

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves – because there *are* a few nicks and kinks tarnishing this otherwise priceless artefact. Thankfully, even the most frustrating, awkward and laughable moments are fleeting, and you’re soon back into the joy of the chase.

The chase, that is, for another ancient item. Despite Lara’s assertions in Crystal Dynamics’ first *Tomb Raider* – “I *hate* tombs!” – she seems to have had a recent change of heart. The campaign centres round Lara’s father’s desire to find a supposedly undying prophet residing in the long-lost city

“There are plenty of ways to approach conflict, from silent and stealthy to guns blazing”

of Kitezh. The all-consuming work became an obsession for Lara’s father, and after public ridicule for his research (you know how the newspapers *love* their front-page coverage of archaeological work) he was found dead in his office, pistol in hand. Lara, like everyone else, thought his work was pure fantasy – that is until she came face-to-face with the mythical Sun Queen, Himiko. The goddess did some pretty weird stuff, like control the weather and, y’know... stay alive for several hundred years, and now Lara realises her father wasn’t actually crazy after all. To Kitezh!

As you might have realised by now, Crystal Dynamics is working hard to expand Lara’s back story, and the

addition of her father, a driving force behind her quest, is a strong one.

There are a few moments where the story falters – at one point a character directly asks Lara what she plans to do with the power of immortality that she hopes to find, and as she pauses you actually start to question it yourself – but for the most part the undercurrent of daddy issues does an excellent job of driving her forward.

Camilla Luddington, reprising her role as Ms Croft, does a fantastic job with a well-written script; our one criticism is that the whole game takes itself very seriously, and sometimes needs a little light relief. But perhaps we’ve been watching too much Indiana Jones.

The supporting cast is also portrayed well, with the head honcho in the unlikeable-baddie-brigade doing a great job of being... well, unlikeable. He leads Trinity, the mysterious organisation that is also searching for the prophet that Lara is after, whose main purpose is to destroy stuff and provide cannon fodder for Lara. It’s harder for us to hate the nameless grunts this time around – in the previous game they were all fanatical worshippers, hell-bent on sacrificing Lara. This time round, they’re just guys, doing their jobs. As we carved through them with our dual ice picks, we couldn’t help feel a bit bad. We’re obviously getting soft.

We had to get over it quickly, though, because the combat is fairly frequent, and varied. There are plenty of ways to approach any given conflict situation, from silent and stealthy with Lara’s bow to guns blazing. And projectile weapons that can be crafted on the fly, like Molotovs, make every fight surprisingly tactical.

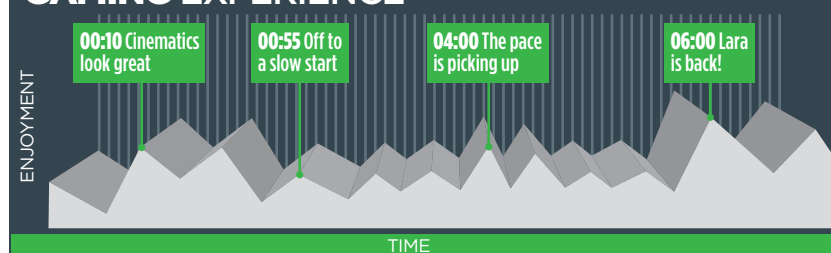
Unfortunately, enemy AI is absolutely shocking. Even in rooms littered with cover, enemies will happily walk slowly towards you, meander between cover at a leisurely pace or just repeatedly miss you from three feet away. Lara has an assault rifle in her hand, but they still think the best way to kill her is to run right up to her and try and shoot her with a pistol from point-blank range? Idiots.

Only they’re *not* idiots, because apparently they also *always* know



✖ The game really does look absolutely fantastic, with incredible lighting and some impressive draw distances.

GAMING EXPERIENCE



RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

TESTING XBOX 360



LARA'S 360 ADVENTURE
Xbox 360 owners can still enjoy the latest *Tomb Raider* title, albeit with slightly lower-quality graphics...

IS IT MISSING FEATURES?
The full game has been ported over by Nixxes, meaning 360 gamers will get all of the same features as those on Xbox One.

HOW BIG IS THE GRAPHICAL DIFFERENCE?
Fairly large – but only because it looks so good on Xbox One. The team has done a great job of porting the game over without losing too much detail.

WILL IT GET THE SAME POST-RELEASE SUPPORT?
As far as we know, yes. Square Enix has confirmed a season pass for the Xbox One version, although little has been said about 360 DLC.

DOES IT SUPPORT AS MANY PLAYERS ONLINE?
There is no PvP mode for *Rise*, with point-based challenges making up the majority of the online side of things.

IN CONCLUSION?
Nixxes has done a great job of porting this over – if you haven't invested in an Xbox One yet, the 360 version is well worth a look.

where Lara is. At one point, we blew open a door from a hiding spot. As we crept up to it, totally out of sight, a soldier on the other side yelled "there she is!" A hail of bullets instantly hit the doorframe, exactly where Lara was hiding. Bullshit.

It's lucky, then, that these fights only last a few minutes at a time, and are

broken up by the far superior exploration sections. For a game that's actually fairly linear, the world feels incredibly open. Huge, sprawling hubs offer you the options to explore, find hidden caves and tombs, or

complete challenges. Some of these aren't accessible until you unlock a specific ability, while others will help you improve certain skills or weapons. You are encouraged to explore, but if you want to just power on with the story and come back later, you can. The amount of stuff to do, however, is impressive, and stumbling across new areas, locked doors and lost artefacts got us far too excited. And when you

do run out of main game to play, you can always dive into the new sort-of-multiplayer mode: Expeditions.

This new mode is a replacement for the last game's completely uninspiring arena-based multiplayer, and offers a variety of score-attack or chapter-replay challenges in which to best your friends' times or scores. The twist here

is the addition of Expedition cards, which can be bought with in-game credits or real-world money, and give Lara new loadouts or change the gameplay. The mode is fun, and the cards mix things up, but it sadly doesn't make up for *Rise's*

criminal lack of New Game+ mode – something the game is crying out for.

If this doesn't sound like your bag, perhaps the game's gorgeous graphics will make up for the disappointment. Most of the game is set in snowy mountains, and while a geothermal valley helps add a little variation, the theme here is definitely an icy white. Snow deforms beautifully as Lara pushes through it, ancient rocks

"The amount of stuff to do is impressive, and stumbling across new areas got us far too excited"

SEQUENCE

Your four-step guide to tomb raiding

Tombs are back, and here we'll show you exactly how to work your way through the first in the game



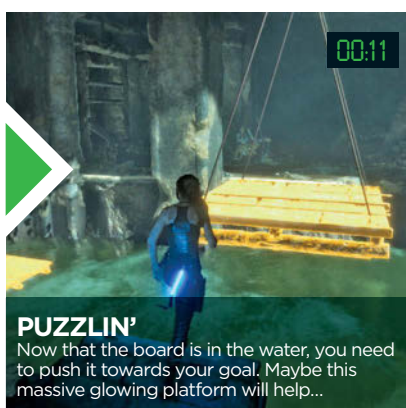
GET IN THERE

Your first task is to get into the tomb. Prepare for some crumbling rock, massive jumps and impressive architecture.



USE YOUR SKILLS

Once inside, you'll need to use Lara's Survival Instinct to find interactive objects. You can shoot this board to make it fall.



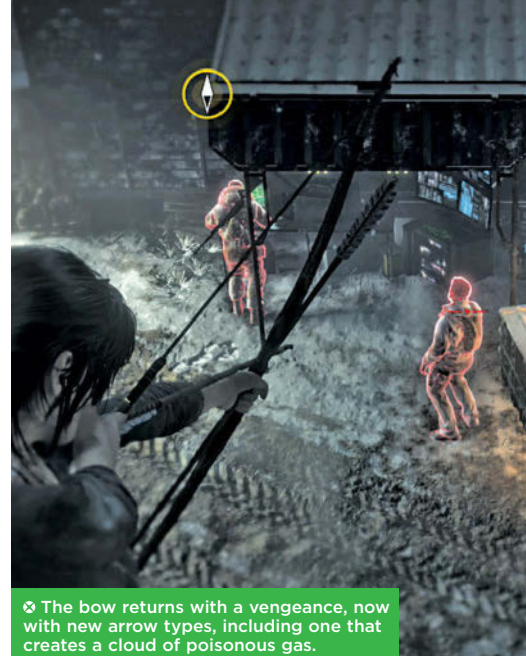
PUZZLIN'

Now that the board is in the water, you need to push it towards your goal. Maybe this massive glowing platform will help...

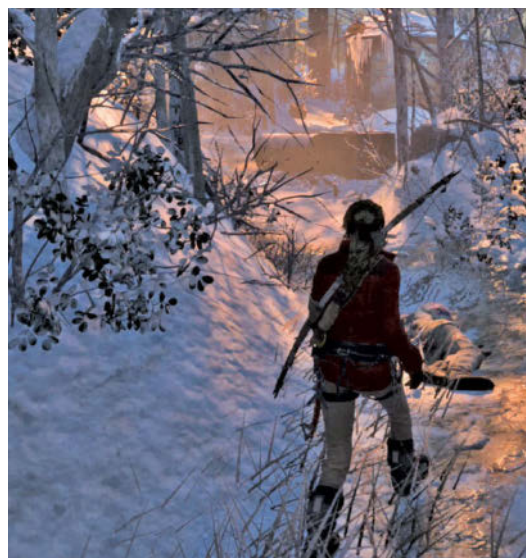


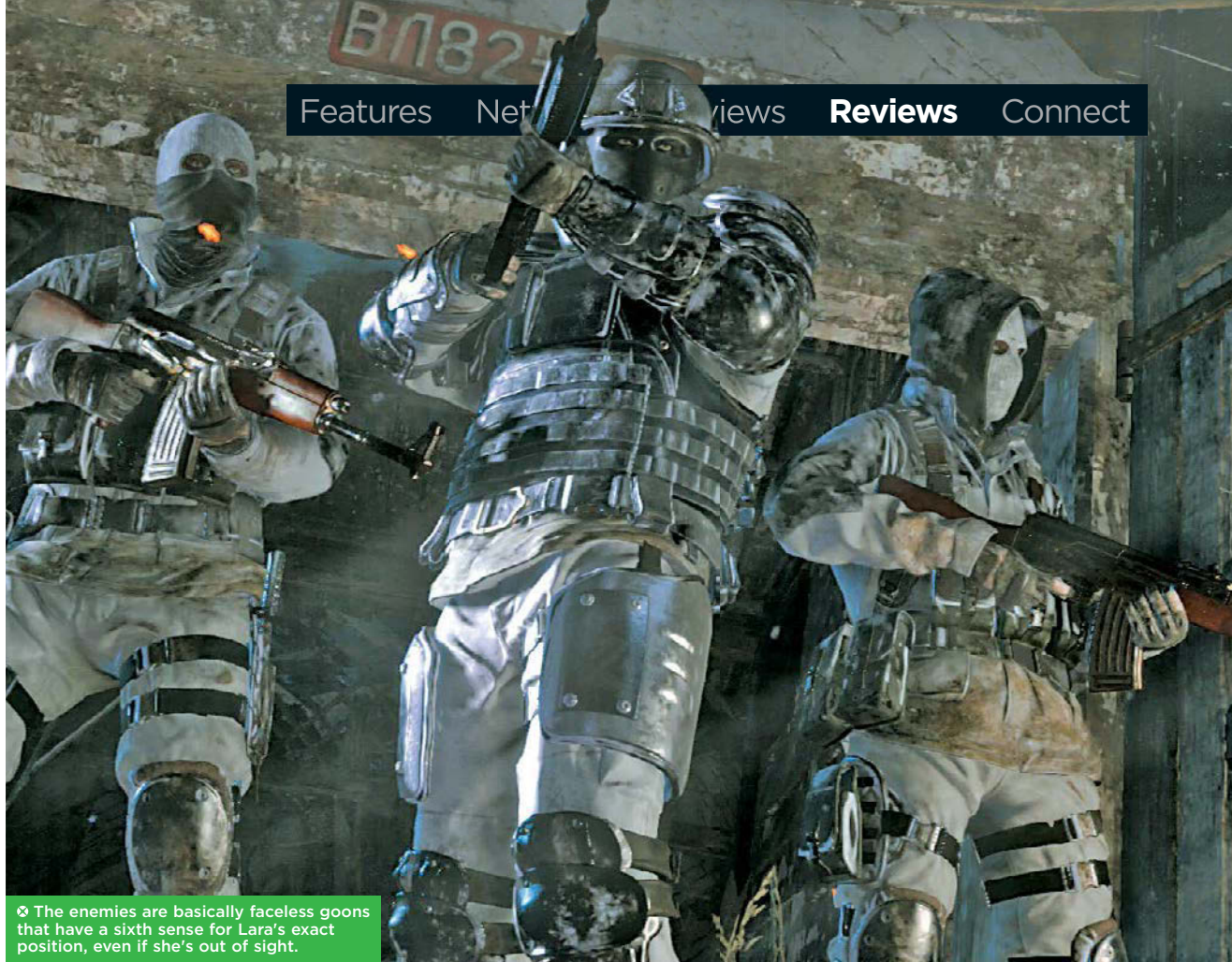
GOT IT!

It might've taken a few attempts but eventually we worked out the timing, and we're on our way to claiming the goods!



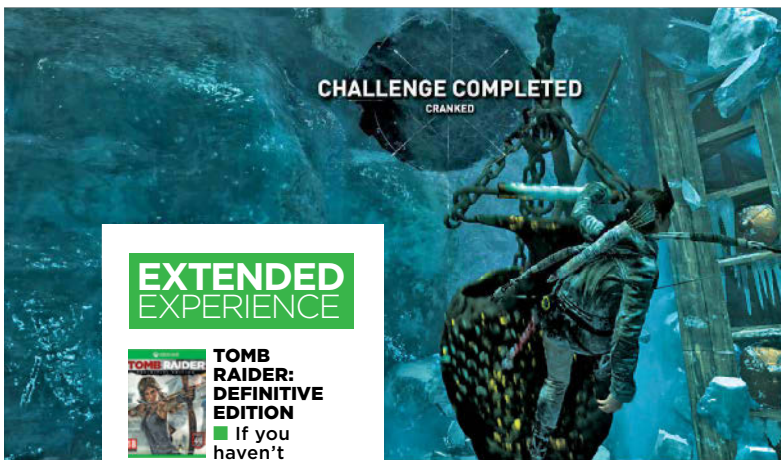
The bow returns with a vengeance, now with new arrow types, including one that creates a cloud of poisonous gas.





✕ The enemies are basically faceless goons that have a sixth sense for Lara's exact position, even if she's out of sight.

Features Netviews **Reviews** Connect



EXTENDED EXPERIENCE



TOMB RAIDER: DEFINITIVE EDITION

■ If you haven't already played it, it's well worth heading back to Square's 2013 reboot of the series before you play *Rise*.



UNCHARTED: THE NATHAN DRAKE COLLECTION

■ We hate to recommend PS4 titles, but the *Uncharted* series absolutely exceptional, even if it is on an inferior console.



INDIANA JONES AND THE RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

■ Go back to the master of tomb-raiding and watch Harrison Ford (and some Nazis) search for the Ark of the Covenant.

present the perfect level of crumble and, in a neat touch that makes her feel more *human*, Lara squeezes her hair dry as she climbs out of the water.

In fact, let's just pause for a second here. We need to talk about Lara's hair. We don't know who was in charge of hair physics at Crystal Dynamics, but whoever it was needs a pat on the back. That stuff looks *awesome*. At one point we actually missed what Lara was saying in a cutscene because her hair slid off her shoulder like actual, honest-to-god, real life hair. It was mesmerising. Maybe we missed the next-gen hair memo and all games are doing this now, but it blew us away.

Ahem. Anyway. Let's get onto tombs. One of the biggest criticisms of the 2013 *Tomb Raider* was the lack of "proper" tombs, which caused some

consternation. That has been brilliantly remedied here; you will be notified if you're near a tomb as you follow the game's main path. If you want to explore it, you can, but it's entirely up to you. Choose to enter these areas and you'll be faced with a genuinely challenging puzzle; at the end of the path you'll get a new ability that will help you in your quest, and plenty of loot besides. Or, if you're not in the mood, you can bypass this entirely. The choice, like with much of *Rise*, is yours.

The same can be said for upgrades. These now require different ingredients, including animal hide, cloth and machine parts, so collecting everything is essential if you want the best weapons. It's a really well-balanced system, one that not only feels fair but becomes highly addictive.

It's probably fair to say that, in a year packed with big releases, Ms Croft was really up against it when it came to beating the crowd. With *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* Crystal Dynamics has ticked all the boxes. And that *hair!*

✕ **STEPHEN ASHBY**

VERDICT

One of the standout games of the generation so far, *Rise* provides stunning setpieces, brilliant exploration and challenging puzzles. This is an Xbox One essential.



X-ONE scored **9** for *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Game Studios

DEVELOPER
343 Industries

GAME TYPE
It's god damn Halo

PLAYERS
1-24

PRICE
£44.99/\$59.99

DLC
Yes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Forging A Legend (60G)

IN BRIEF

With Master Chief gone rogue from the UNSC to locate Cortana, man hunter Agent Locke is sent on a mission across the galaxy to locate John-117 and bring him back home.

HALO 5 GUARDIANS

halowaypoint.com /343-Industries @Halo

Repeating the sins of the past



It's easy to draw parallels with the past when it comes to *Halo*. In spite of 343's intentions, it seems the sins of the franchise

are doomed to be repeated. *Halo 5: Guardians* has emerged as the spiritual successor to *Halo 2*, and long-time fans will know that statement is something of a double-edged energy sword. 343 has struggled to deliver a well-rounded package with its sophomore effort, like Bungie a decade ago.

Major revisions and bold design decisions to multiplayer make *Halo* feel as revolutionary as it did back at the birth of Xbox Live, even if it does occasionally stumble over its own aspirations – sadly, the same can't be said about the glossy campaign. Despite feeling more competent than *Halo 4*, it's still a distressingly brief and resoundingly anti-climactic jaunt through soulless covenant corridors and forerunner fortifications.

"You are pale imitations of my Spartans. John, the others, they saved the human race. What can you do? You are children playing dress-up." These words, scathingly directed at Fireteam Osiris towards the end of the six-hour campaign, do a killer job of summarising the lingering feeling of discontent we have towards *Guardians*. By employing a split-narrative design, 343 successfully deprives players of time with the Master Chief, but it never takes the time to really establish Spartan Locke or his team; making the majority of the campaign feel like a hollow exercise in galactic warfare.

Guardians' biggest sin, however, is that it also robs *Halo* of its sense of adventure. *Halo* has never been more compartmentalised; it leads you through beautiful corridors and small arenas before whisking you away to another location and restarting the cycle. There's

"343 has struggled to deliver a well-rounded package with its sophomore effort, like Bungie a decade ago"

a constant sense of forboding that the campaign's most exciting moments are taking place off-camera – either because you are inside the wrong lead character or because the epic action *Halo* is known for is unfolding in a cutscene.

It's a shame, because no *Halo* game has so successfully made us feel like we were embodying a super-powered Spartan warrior. 343 has introduced alterations to the pace and flow of combat, with new mobility options highlighting your prowess – it feels like a natural evolution. But *Guardians'* campaign lacks the '30 seconds of fun' gameplay that made the franchise so successful, not to mention the classic sandbox design. The studio has failed to deliver on what made *Halo* so iconic. It might be technically proficient, it might be gorgeous, but it fails to create one standout setpiece or memorable moment across 15 levels. *Halo* used to be a trailblazer, now it feels like a re-skinned *Star Wars: Republic Commando* stuffed into the rotting design philosophy cultivated by *Call Of Duty*.

If the campaign is a competent misunderstanding of what makes *Halo* tick, then the multiplayer is a massive statement of intent towards the competitive shooter market. Arena Mode re-bottles the multiplayer magic *Halo 2* and *Halo 3* so effortlessly exuded; taking familiar modes, pairing them up with a

varied array of well-designed maps, and reining battles in to tight 4v4 encounters. This is *Guardians* at its finest, the new movement and combat refinements working with the tense pacing.

And then there's Warzone. 24 players across two teams drop into huge, sprawling maps while AI soldiers and hostiles flood the map. You can attack other players, you can try to capture bases, or you can tackle computer-controlled bosses. Essentially everything you do in Warzone contributes points to your team's total – it's designed to allow for multiple ways to win and insane comebacks at any moment. But 343 occasionally stumbles over its own aspirations; games of Warzone have a tendency to grow tiresome during their 15- to 20-minute playtime.

There's also the most controversial aspect of Warzone to be considered; drop-pods where you can cash in Requisition cards to get particular items, vehicles and weapons. These are accumulated in packs through in-game currency or purchased with real cash. Each card has an attached energy cost, meaning you'll need to wait until a certain point in the game before some items can be deployed. It's a natural balancing mechanic, though it doesn't always work as intended. Still, this could shift over the next 12 months as players begin to settle into Warzone's unfamiliar rhythm.

Despite a strong multiplayer showing, it's hard to ignore that lingering feeling of discontent towards *Halo 5: Guardians*. It's the sequel that had to prove whether 343 Industries is capable of carrying the *Halo* mantle into the future. *Guardians* might contain an incredible technical proficiency and a desire to innovate, but 343 forgot to give *Halo* its heart and soul, and we don't know if we can forgive it for that.

JOSH WEST

GAMING EXPERIENCE



VERDICT

343 Industries is clearly passionate, but it's shown a criminal misunderstanding of what makes the franchise work. *Halo 5: Guardians* has moments of greatness, but it's a shadow of its former self.

X-ONE scored **6** for *Halo 5: Guardians*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**



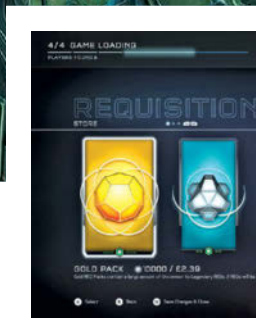
❌ Master Chief might be back, but *Halo* fans will be disappointed by the anticlimactic story and weak campaign.



❌ Solo players will likely grow frustrated with the complacent AI that fails to follow even the most basic of orders.

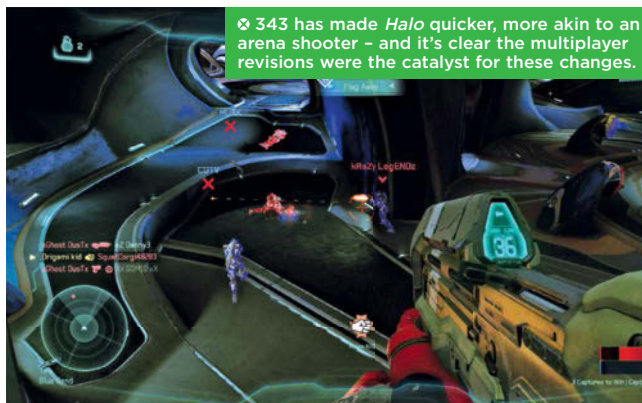


❌ We've been waiting years to meet the Spartans from Blue Team after strong extended universe showings, but sadly they are wasted.



TRENDING #GETREQED

■ The addition of Req Cards to unlock weapons is going to cause controversy; it'll be interesting to see how this plays out over the next 12 months.



❌ 343 has made *Halo* quicker, more akin to an arena shooter – and it's clear the multiplayer revisions were the catalyst for these changes.



❌ Arena Mode will test long-time *Halo* fans, making sure every single game is ranked to give your constantly changing level.

REVIEW

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Treyarch

GAME TYPE
First-person shooter

PLAYERS
1-18

PRICE
£54.99/\$59.99

DLC
Four new map packs for multiplayer and zombies mode to be launched throughout 2016

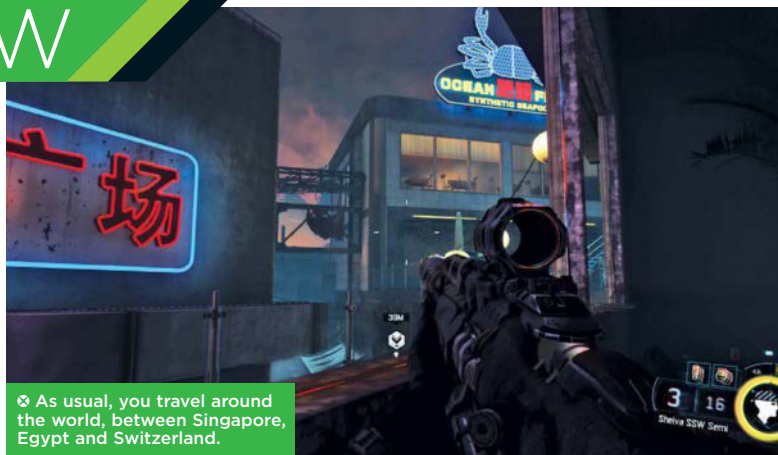
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Now What? (100G)

IN BRIEF

As a half-man, half-machine supersoldier, you must travel the world hunting down four of your former colleagues, who are threatening to reveal a conspiracy at the heart of the CIA. It's better than it sounds.

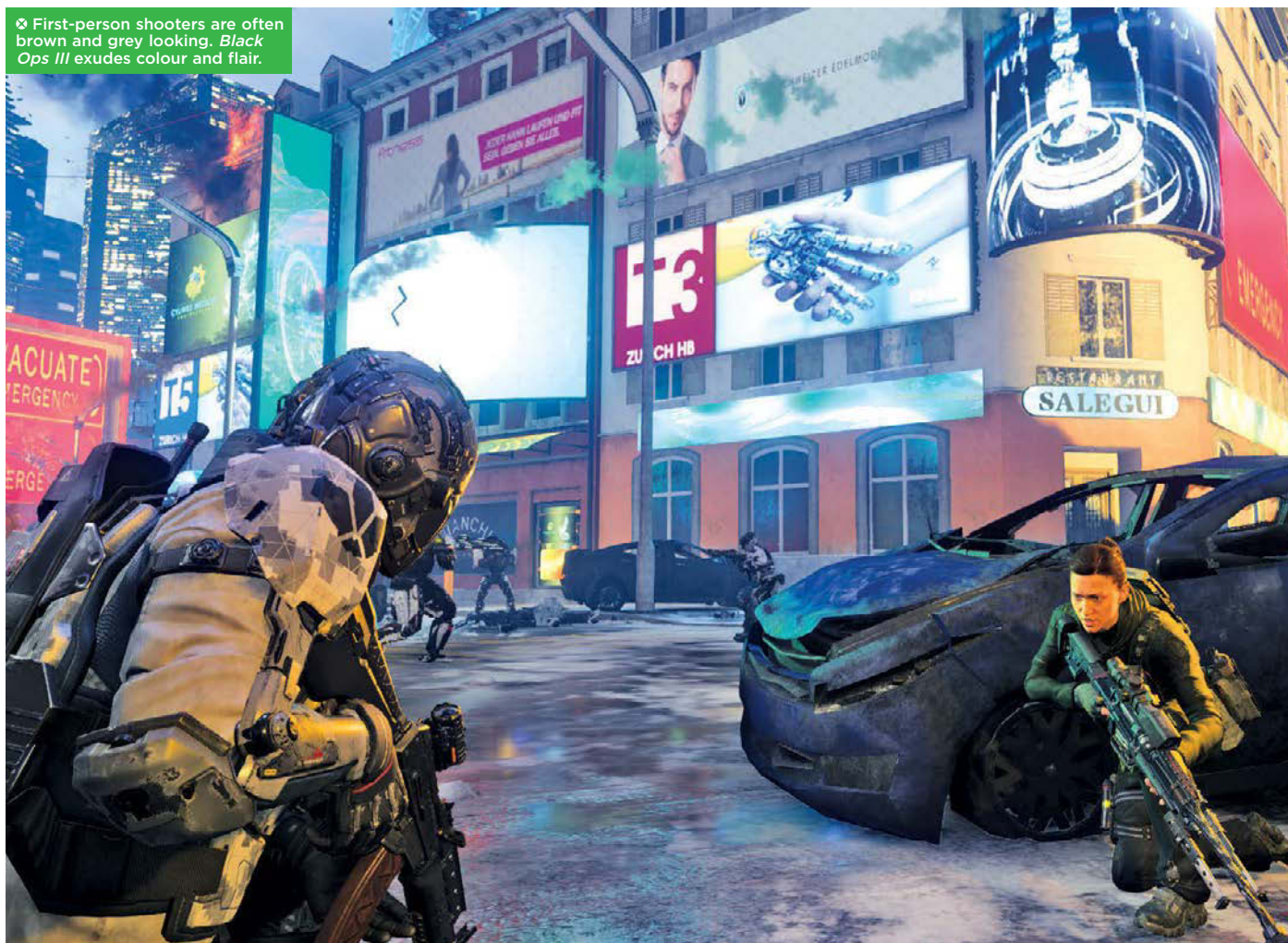
ALSO ON
XBOX 360



✂ As usual, you travel around the world, between Singapore, Egypt and Switzerland.



✂ Multiplayer receives the usual tweaks and optimisations, but it's starting to feel tired.



✂ First-person shooters are often brown and grey looking. *Black Ops III* exudes colour and flair.



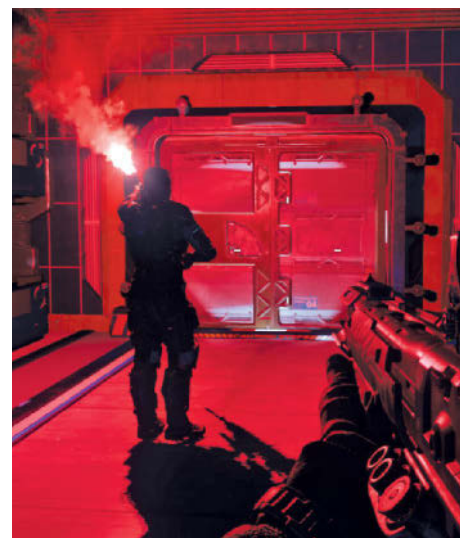
✂ Even more than *Advanced Warfare*, gadgets and abilities are part of *Black Ops III*'s campaign



TRENDING

#CODGONE MAD

■ Forget multiplayer and zombies – *Black Ops III*'s campaign makes it the most mind-bending *Call Of Duty* to date



CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS III

www.callofduty.com f /Treyarch @CallofDuty

After all these years, COD's finally gone mad



When November comes round and you fire up, for the first time, yet another entry in Activision's behemoth franchise, how can you not let out a sigh? "Call Of Duty", nowadays, feels almost like a jab at the customer. These are games we play out of obligation, a sense of inevitability. You might not want to, or really care, but if you're interested at all in gaming, it feels like it's your duty to play *COD*.

Black Ops III is a slow burn, but give it three hours, maybe four and all your pessimism will start to disappear. On the surface it's the loudest, dumbest *Call Of Duty* to date. Barely 30 seconds goes by in *Black Ops III*'s campaign where you're not shooting at someone, or blowing something up, or mashing the grenade button – compared to some of the others, like the celebrated *Modern Warfare*, which switches gracefully between loud action and quiet stealth, the pacing in *Black Ops III* is a mess. Plus, there really aren't many great, choreographed action sequences. In *Modern Warfare 2*, you had that fantastic level scaling the cliff and infiltrating the airfield. In *Ghosts*, you had the opener aboard the self-destructing space station. *Black Ops III* seems like it's mainly just loud noises and blunt shootouts. You could be forgiven for getting bored with it, or writing it off as a repetitive sequel.

But a few hours in, that all starts to change. Instead of typical first-person shooter levels you find yourself in dreamscapes, surreal nightmare worlds and even a World War II battlefield. The story, originally some guff about AI and secret weapons research and terrorists becomes this strange, gross examination of identity and consciousness. It sounds impossible, right? It sounds like we're exaggerating, or maybe a bit too easily

"You won't find another game that combines so uniquely enormous production values with sly, occasionally smart writing"

impressed. But really. If you pay close enough attention to *Black Ops III* it genuinely has something to say. *Spec Ops: The Line* took to task the relationship between videogame, videogame developer and videogame player. *Black Ops III* is full of similar themes, questioning whether people – once they have access to so much information – can ever really have a unique personality. It's a startling, surprising look at technology, much more personal than *COD*'s usual Tom Clancy-esque technophobia.

Of course it's still made by Treyarch, and funded by Activision, so it's massive and brash and full of men shouting at each other. But that's a good thing. You won't find another game that combines so uniquely enormous production values with sly, occasionally smart writing. *Black Ops III* is something new. If *Modern Warfare* changed shooters back in 2007, *Black Ops III* deserves to be as influential. It just depends whether people are too fed up with *Call Of Duty* these days to really pay attention.

Admittedly, their weariness could be partly justified by *Black Ops III*'s multiplayer. It runs as flawlessly as you'd expect and the maps are designed to the usual production line perfection, but

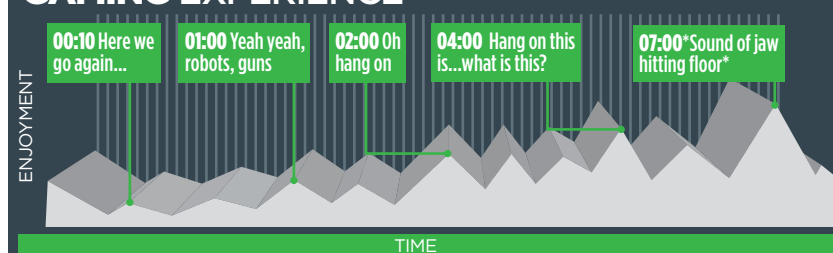
COD online is starting to feel tired. Yes there are tons of weapons and toys. Yes you can progress and customise your character. Yes you can Prestige and tinker to your heart's content. But you could do that in *Advanced Warfare*, and *Call Of Duty: Ghosts*, and *Modern Warfare 3*. No doubt, some people prefer *COD* this way – it's a reliable service, updated rather than overhauled year on year. But it doesn't feel like something you can really get excited about any more. It is what it always is and does what it always does.

The new specialist classes change things a little, making it so, when you start up in multiplayer, you pick a character build and get a personalised special ability. The Outrider, for example, gets a silent but deadly bow and arrow, whereas Ruin, a big melee character, gets close-range area-of-effect attacks. Each of these abilities can be customised and improved alongside guns and armour, and add a little seasoning to *COD*'s usual online fare, but it's not much. For better or worse, multiplayer is still almost exactly as you'd expect.

Zombies mode on the other hand is drastically expanded, pitting you against the undead in an entire city, lovingly designed like 1940s Chicago. As ever, it's better played with friends, and the difficulty curve can be brutal, but Zombies has the same breadth and attention to detail as *Black Ops III*'s campaign – like the central single-player mode it constantly surprises you. And that's a pretty big achievement for a *COD* game. Year on year they hit the shelves, and considering how old this series is getting, and how much it's stooped in expectation, most of the time we find we were right to expect more of the same. But *Black Ops III* is truly an original. Not in eight years has *Call Of Duty* felt this alive.

✖ ED SMITH

GAMING EXPERIENCE



VERDICT

If you can look past the dragging multiplayer, the campaign goes places you'd never expect. Compared to the *COD* sequels of recent years, *Black Ops III* feels incredibly fresh.

X-ONE scored **8** for
Call Of Duty: Black Ops III

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Quebec

GAME TYPE
London-based stab-'em-up

PLAYERS
1

PRICE
£44.99/\$59.99

DLC
Several DLC packs confirmed, offering new missions

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
You Wouldn't Steal A Policeman's Helmet (15G)

IN BRIEF

Twins Jacob and Evie Frye journey to London in 1868 to overthrow the powerful Templars that control the city, and meet famous faces from history as they complete their mission.

ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

assassinscreed.ubi.com/syndicate

/AssassinsCreed

@AssassinsCreed

London brawling



It's been a long time since an *Assassin's Creed* city felt like a playground.

Not since the early days of Ezio have we felt that

joy of clambering over rooftops and discovering items, missions and side-quests that distracted us from our objectives. But we challenge you to travel through Victorian London without finding something to distract you from reaching that next memory sequence.

We're not talking endless numbers of chests, either. While the map is still peppered with collectibles, things have been scaled back from *Unity*. Instead, you'll find dozens of missions across the seven London Boroughs – whether it's saving kids from a factory, assassinating a gang leader, or capturing a heavily-guarded cart packed with cargo. The variety is impressive, and, after years of boredom-inducing challenges, it ensures that *Syndicate* feels less repetitive – although it still doesn't completely avoid the feeling.

It certainly helps that the city is massive, gorgeous, and packed with character. The modern age has allowed Ubisoft to expand the world both horizontally and vertically, and the results are impressive. More than once we stopped on a rooftop and slowly rotated the camera to take in the sights. And there are few greater joys than using the Line Launcher to go from street level to roof in seconds, then leaping onto a passing train and riding it to your next destination. The *Creed* series has always done a great job of making its cities feel alive, and London is no different. You can just sit and watch it for hours, or jump in and cause chaos.

Of course, a new game brings new tools, including the previously mentioned (and utterly brilliant) rope launcher, which we never want to be

“The modern age has allowed Ubisoft to expand the city both horizontally and vertically, and the results are impressive”

without ever again. Climbing up walls? That's so three years ago. And don't talk to us about walking – we're all about ziplines now. But *Syndicate* brings back some old favourites too; throwing knives are back. Headshots with Evie are a particular joy, to the point where we used them far more than her hidden blade. With Jacob, on the other hand, who can carry fewer knives, we were more reliant on his ability to drop in, kill someone, then rope-launch back up to a roof – why yes, we are a bit like a Victorian Batman.

The differences between the twins were talked about a lot in the leadup to *Syndicate's* release, and but in reality there are only a few unique skills for each character. The vast majority of their skill trees are the same, although we did find ourselves focusing on stealth skills for Evie and combat for Jacob at first. For the most part, the characters play identically, and in the open-world you can switch between them at will – it's only main story missions that require one or the other.

What *does* set the twins apart – and what makes this the most engaging and amusing *Assassin's Creed* story yet – is their personalities. Jacob, the punch-first-ask-questions-later fella is all about getting his gang together, while Evie has her sights set on a Piece of Eden –

the mystical whatsits that are shiny and come from an ancient blah blah blah. While the two are working towards the same goal – killing a buttload of Templars – their methods are very different, and this causes clashes. The sibling relationship is really well-written, and the facial animation is excellent, giving the twins real character. At first we thought Jacob was a bit of a prick, but as we progressed we saw more of his personality, including a lighter, funnier side that *Assassin's Creed* often misses. If London is the best part of the game, the relationship between the two protagonists is a close second.

Sadly, it's not all sunshine – this is London, after all. Despite two(!) day one patches, there are still some glitches rattling around. Don't get us wrong – this is nothing on the scale of *Unity* – but it kills the immersion slightly. One of our assassination targets decided to pause in the middle of his lecture, and, despite having no idea we were there, sprint out of the door and run circuits around the corridors of the building. In the end we just let him run into us, then stabbed him in the neck. Sneaky, eh?

The main missions keep the pace up well, with a good mix of tailing, killing, stealing, and all the rest (although the less we say about the disappointing final boss the better). The supporting cast includes all the faces you'd expect from a Victorian *AC* title – including Darwin, Dickens, Florence Nightingale and Queen Victoria herself. Did you expect anything else?

Syndicate might not solve all of the problems of the *Assassin's Creed* series, but with an astonishing city to explore, plenty of things to do and (at last) engaging, entertaining lead characters to get behind, this is the best *Assassin's Creed* title since Ezio hung up his hood.

✖ STEPHEN ASHBY

GAMING EXPERIENCE



VERDICT

Assassin's Creed Syndicate is not without its problems, but it turns out that putting two excellent protagonists in a brilliantly recreated city is all it takes to make us excited about the *Assassin's Creed* series again.

8

X-ONE scored 8 for *Assassin's Creed Syndicate*

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA

DEVELOPER
Ghost Games

GAME TYPE
Racing

PLAYERS
1-8

PRICE
£39.99/\$59.99

DLC
Yes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Medium

NEED TO UNLOCK
Above The Law (40g)

IN BRIEF

The long-serving racing series returns with a 'soft reboot' that aims to combine the car-tuning customisation of *Underground*, the drift culture of *Carbon* and the open-world matchmaking of *Rivals*.

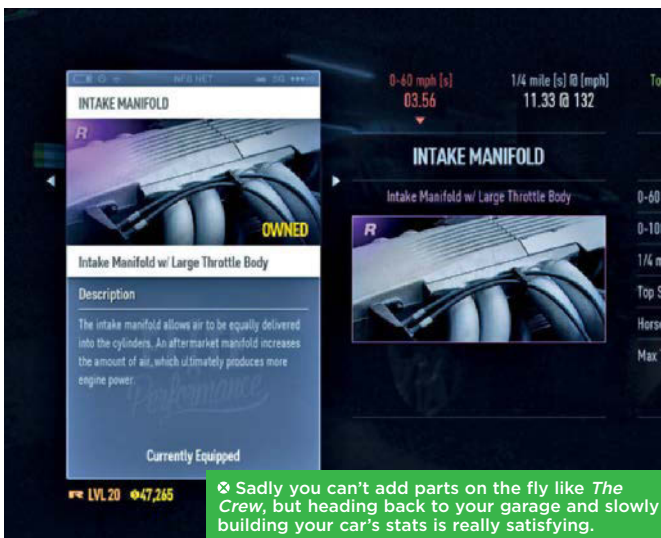


✗ The FMV sequences are done well enough, but your cars are superimposed as renders creating a jarring augmented reality feel.

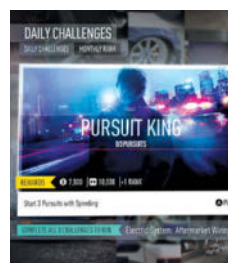
✗ The main story is actually quite a short affair, with only 79 central missions to burn through - thankfully there's a smattering of mini activities, too.



✗ *NFS* doesn't blow its budget on A-list stars - expect D-listers from the likes of *Game Of Thrones* and *The Musketeers*.

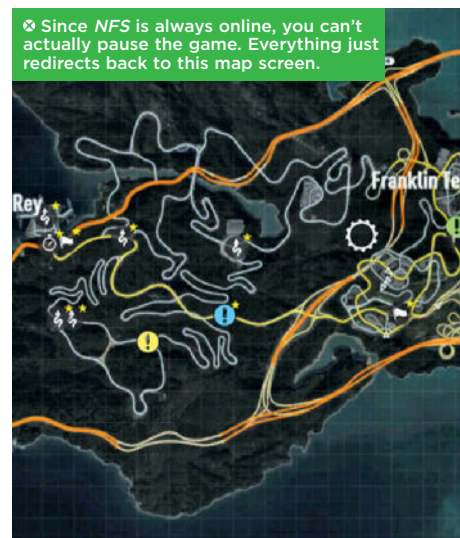


✗ Sadly you can't add parts on the fly like *The Crew*, but heading back to your garage and slowly building your car's stats is really satisfying.



TRENDING

#STREET ICONS
■ *NFS* also has a cast of real-life legends from the world of street racing, including former Yakuza



✗ Since *NFS* is always online, you can't actually pause the game. Everything just redirects back to this map screen.

NEED FOR SPEED

 www.needforspeed.com  facebook.com/needforspeed  [@needforspeed](https://twitter.com/needforspeed)

Retooled racer needs a tune-up



The *Need For Speed* of 2015 so desperately wants you to like it. "Hey look, I've gone back to the car-tuning schtick from the *Underground* days – just like you always wanted!" beams the veteran racing franchise. It leaps into your arms with a skip in its step, its pockets laden with sprints and drifts, an always-online world and enough car customisation to make Vin Diesel weep tears of petroleum. But there's a nervous twitch to that smile – one that reveals a potentially great racer brought low by needless limitations.

It's an internal struggle made all the more frustrating when you realise just how good the new *NFS* can be. The photorealistic nighttime urban streets and winding mountain roads look nothing short of incredible. Even at speed, streetlights bathe every stretch of tarmac in a warm amber glow, while tyre tracks in muddy slipways flaunt a cheer-inducing attention to detail that would make even *GTA V* stop and doff its cap in appreciation. And that perpetual night/dawn setting, all rain slick and neon-drenched, just serves to show off just how gorgeous a world the Swedish studio has managed to craft – but it's also where the cracks start to show. The shift from dead of night to twilight to night creates a bizarre artifice that hints at a much wider problem – a game more interested in creating a looping highlight reel than a living, breathing environment.

NFS' narrative exudes this misguided perspective loudest of all – mainly via a series of awkward cutscenes where you're introduced to the five members of your new crew. The actors give the whole fist-bumping mess a decent punt, but the issue here isn't one of performance, but of prominence. For a game that so proudly exalts the virtues of customisation, you'll find yourself egged into storyline missions by a

"Despite its failings, there's still that likeable enthusiasm pumping through the heart of *Need For Speed*"

narrative determined to make you care. Open-world racers are at their best when they let you create your own story, but *NFS'* reliance on its story makes that freedom feel oppressively linear.

Despite their paper-thin characters, your crew divides up the five gameplay tenets of *NFS* – Speed, Style, Build, Crew and Outlaw. They offer up increasingly challenging events ranging from sprints to gymkhanas, each one spewing out REP (XP), cash and unlocks. Outlaw is the biggest highlight; a combo of all the other four types, it chucks in a police chase and creates the most intense mission variation available.

However, it's in the long-awaited return of car customisation is where *NFS* really excels. Apart from increasing horsepower via new parts, you can head to your Garage at any time and tweak almost every aspect of your new machine – massaging it from speed-eating monster to drift king in a handful of sliders. It's an element that should have re-entered the series long ago and it suits the return to car-tuning perfectly.

Then there's the audio – not the ubiquitous electro-with-a-splash-of-metal soundtrack, but the sound of the cars themselves. There aren't as many motors available as there are in the likes of fellow open-world racer *Forza Horizon 2*, but for all the Porsches and Subarus available you can hear every tiny adjustment growling beneath the hood of your modded beast. Garage space is limited to five cars, but you

can just as easily stick with the same motor, upgrading and recalibrating it to suit new events. Just don't expect to mod a high-end Ferrari into oblivion – almost all of the top-tier supercars offer little to no customisation, an unsettling limitation that flies in the face of the options available elsewhere.

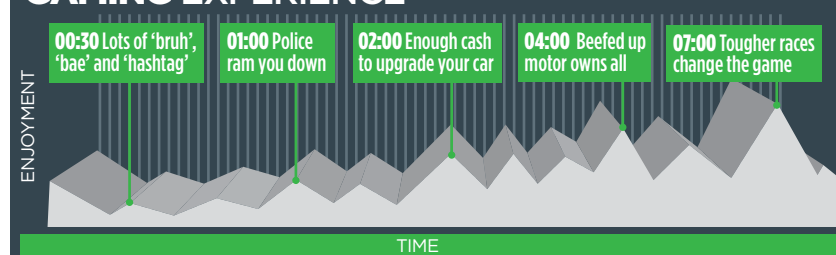
It's just frustrating that all those adjustments in customisation (which extend to upgrading everything from liveries to bumpers) end up at odds with the resolutely arcadey handling model. Even with all those attributes to accommodate, *NFS* is often far too forgiving – even when you make an error. It's only when you hit the Hard events around halfway through the game that it starts to actively punish you for mistakes, a fact not helped by persistent and unnecessary rubber-banding that dilutes the legitimacy of each race.

Other inconsistencies elsewhere continue to hamper the whole experience: the damage model is purely aesthetic, meaning there's no danger in pushing your motor too far in a race. The damage doesn't regenerate either – you'll have to fast travel to your Garage to repair it. Then there's the issue of multiplayer – the always-online infrastructure is largely pointless considering there's no PvP to speak of, while the inability to pause the game just adds to the pervading frustration.

But despite its failings, there's still that likeable enthusiasm pumping through the heart of *NFS*. Upgrade your car far enough and you can begin to counter the arcadey handling, building a beast that's far more unforgiving. With that impeccably rendered open-world glowing around you even your Skins-lite crew start to grow on you. Slightly. We know Ghost Games can make a memorable racer – 2013's *Rivals* is proof of that – it's just a shame this *NFS* isn't the entry to put the series back on top.

X DOM RESEIGH-LINCOLN

GAMING EXPERIENCE



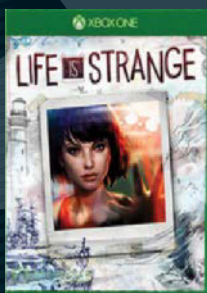
VERDICT

One of the most visually striking open-worlds and a formidable car customisation suite aren't enough to save *Need For Speed* from stalling on its own start line.

X-ONE scored **6** for *Need for Speed*

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Dontnod

GAME TYPE
Time-bending adventure

PLAYERS
1

PRICE
£15.99/\$19.99

DLC
The season pass reviewed here includes all five episodes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Polarized (55G)

IN BRIEF

A time-bending adventure in the Telltale vein, full of hipster bullshit, indie movie sensibilities and one of the best stories in all of gaming. Unique, special and surprisingly affecting.

ALSO ON
XBOX 360

LIFE IS STRANGE

www.lifeisstrange.com f /LifeIsStrangeGame @LifeIsStrange

Subverting expectations – and time – is a lot of fun



There are going to be a lot of people put off by how *Life Is Strange* looks – it's pretty, and has some gorgeous cinematography at times, but it's not *stunning*. Then there are going to be those who don't want to play a game about a bunch of hipsters in the Pacific Northwest saying things like 'hella' and being obsessed with Polaroid photographs (even though the story's set in 2013). All we can say is: forget the doubts, just dive headfirst into the game and enjoy one of the finest stories a game has ever been able to tell.

Life Is Strange is, mechanically, an adventure game – think Telltale's output, but with more focus on conversation and branching dialogues, as well as puzzles that offer genuine challenge... or at least encourage some lateral thinking rather than just explaining everything to you straight away. You explore small regions, find items to use, chat with people and – most importantly – discover the ability to rewind time a limited amount.

This time rewind functionality is the core of the game – and story – as 18-year-old Maxine ('just Max, never Maxine') Caulfield learns about her power, how to use it, and what it can do to her and the world around her. To the player, this means you have the ability to go back on decisions you've just made – do you tell the principal about another student carrying a gun to school, or do you hide it for the time being? Whichever you decide to do, the initial impact might not lead to an outcome you actually expect – while

"Life Is Strange conjures up a superbly-realised feeling of nostalgia"

it might seem like cheating to be able to rewind and re-choose what you want to do, *Life Is Strange* is excellent at keeping you guessing (and second-guessing) your decision-making process.

But talking about something like *Life Is Strange*, beyond explaining the core concept, is a waste of time. This isn't *Call Of Duty*; just because it can be a bit clunky at times, some textures load in slowly, animations are stiff and blah de blah, it doesn't matter. It doesn't change what you do, how you do it, the enjoyment you get out of the experience. *Life Is Strange* is about the story it tells, the relationships you form, the archetypes it subverts, the way it makes you think, the *intense* nostalgia it brings out in even the most heartless of bastards. It's wonderfully imperfect, possibly even more wonderful for that fact.

There's no real way of talking up the story without ruining it for those of you who haven't jumped straight in to the game, so we'll avoid any major beats. The basic background follows Max, her superpower, her best friend Chloe and the residents of Arcadia Bay – all of whom are so much more than the

cardboard cutout secondary characters you get in other games. Is the neckbeard with the m'lady t-shirt actually an anti-social dimwit? Why is the school princess so bitchy? Is everyone really like the image they project to everyone else? *Life Is Strange* keeps you guessing, and genuinely surprises with a lot of answers – sure, there's a fair bit of the 'bad guy has a heart' stuff going on, but there's more than enough that comes out of nowhere, blindsiding you *and* making you feel like an idiot for not figuring it out before.

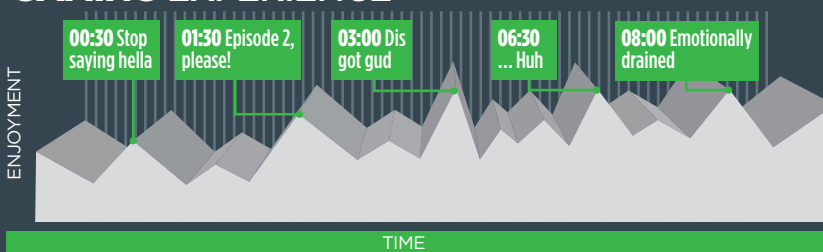
All throughout the five episodes, as the story progresses to an inevitable, genuinely heart-wrenching finale, *Life Is Strange* conjures up a superbly-realised feeling of nostalgia. Younger players will enjoy the story as it is; exciting and impactful and emotional. But those of us who are a bit older, who hold our teenage voyage of self-discovery as little more than a memory – we're the ones who will be hit right in the gut with such an intense, bittersweet mourning for such a recognisable time; a journey through growing up and realising just how the world works, what things are like outside of our bubble, what sort of person we're going to be. This is not something a videogame has ever managed to do to us before, and it's confusing and wonderful in equal measure.

With a story that escalates, twists and turns and confounds as much as it entertains, *Life Is Strange* offers a genuinely brilliant way to spend eight or so hours of your life. If it looks like something that appeals to you, you've likely already bought, played and loved it – this recommendation isn't for you. This is for all of those who are on the shelf, or actively anti-*Life Is Strange*: you will miss out on one of gaming's best experiences in a genre that can – and here does – offer us so much more than just walking through grey corridors, and shooting baddies in the face for high-score points. Get involved.

✱ IAN DRANSFIELD



GAMING EXPERIENCE

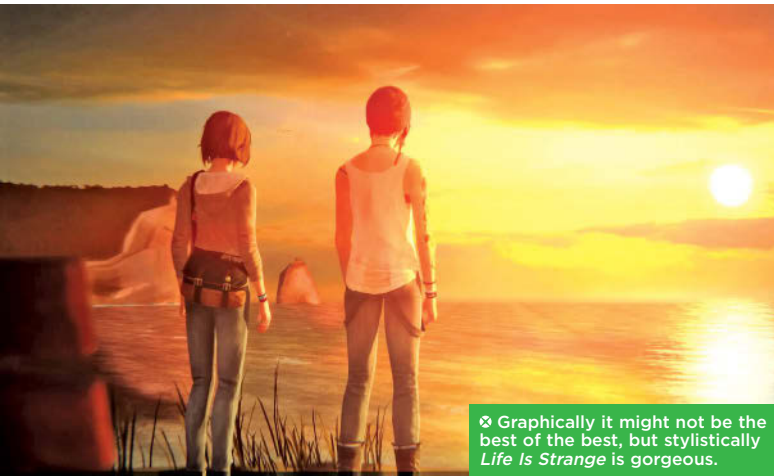


VERDICT

One of the freshest, most intelligent and interesting games to come out in many a year. Leave your preconceptions by the wayside and just let *Life Is Strange* wash over you – you'll love it.

X-ONE scored **9** for *Life Is Strange*

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

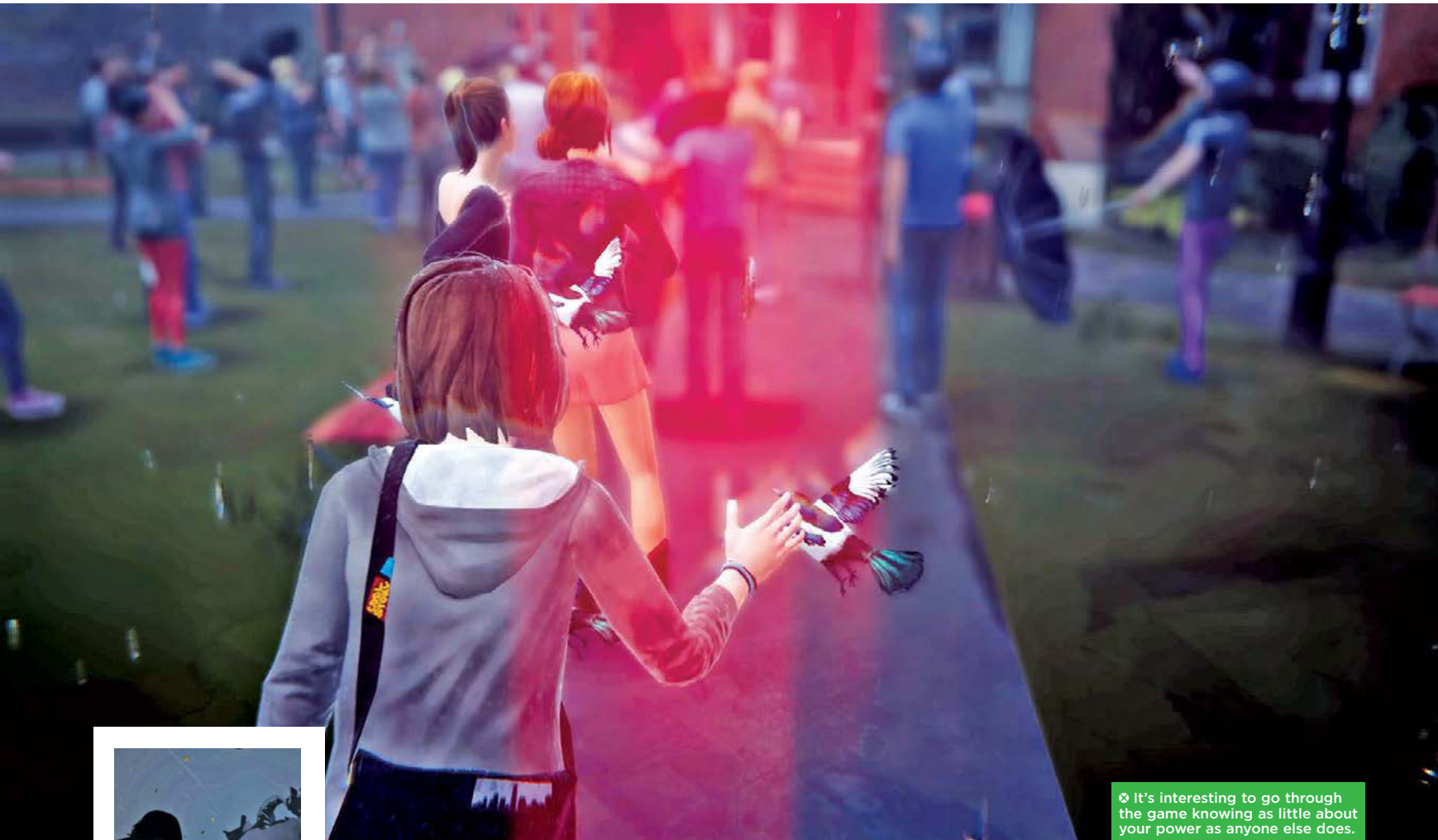


✧ Graphically it might not be the best of the best, but stylistically *Life Is Strange* is gorgeous.

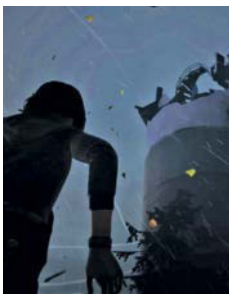


✧ Max's relationship with Chloe runs through the core of the entire story. Best buds, yo.

You have X-ray vision, dude? I don't even know what's in my pockets.



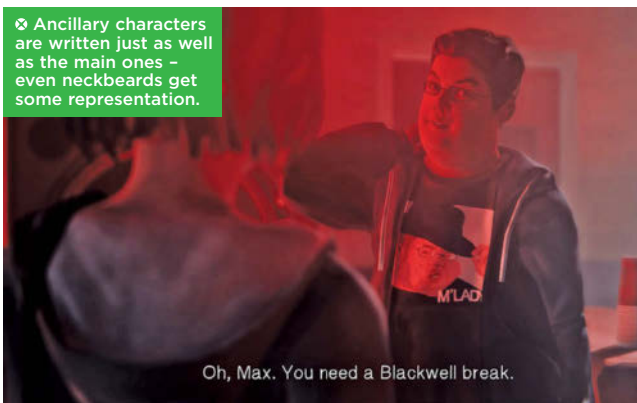
✧ It's interesting to go through the game knowing as little about your power as anyone else does.



TRENDING

#LIFEREALLYISSTRANGE

■ The further you go into the game, the stranger it gets – and you'll want to talk about that.



✧ Ancillary characters are written just as well as the main ones – even neckbeards get some representation.

Oh, Max. You need a Blackwell break.



XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE

ELITE
DANGEROUS

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Frontier
Developments

DEVELOPER

In-house

GAME TYPE

Flight simulation

PLAYERS

MMO

PRICE

£29.99/\$37.49

DLC

Horizons,
bringing
planetary
exploration on
airless worlds

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY

Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK

Centre of the
Galaxy (35G)

IN BRIEF

The whole of our own Milky Way galaxy recreated in its vast, realistic dimensions for you to explore however you wish, to exist however you want and to impact the story as much as you can.

"Earn your living however you like, whether that's the humble life of a trader or the roguish playstyle of a criminal"

✕ There's no denying the spectacle of the game zipping out of hyperspace to be greeted by some of the marvels of space is a real treat.



ELITE DANGEROUS

www.elitedangerous.com

/EliteDangerousOfficial

@EliteDangerous

Life, the universe and everything



Some games only give as much as you put in.

Minecraft weighs heavily on a player's innate imagination and sense

of adventure, *Forza* rewards those with flair for livery design while *Sunset Overdrive* only becomes enjoyable when you force yourself to use its combat creatively. *Elite Dangerous* – with its lack of explicit objectives or storyline – is very much the same. You'll begin rather unceremoniously at a station comparatively close to our own system of planets. There's no suggestion of where to go, of what to do or why and in truth the game doesn't do nearly enough to urge you on into any given aspect. A large part of that is the game's heritage, and though gamers' tastes have changed over the years, this title certainly lives true to the totally unhooked, completely free nature that has always been so integral to *Elite*.

And so if you have a sense of discovery embedded deep within you and a desire

to explore a gorgeously rendered galaxy, then you may well find *Elite Dangerous* is the game for you. You can earn your living however you like, whether that's the humble life of a trader fixing the dynamic economy of the game to your own financial gains or the roguish playstyle of a criminal as you smuggle in illegal goods and gun down other ships to steal their cargo. Perhaps, even, you'll prefer picking one of the three different factions in the game, each vying for control of the galaxy and relying on your help – in the form of increasingly important missions – to manage that. In all honesty, this evolving storyline never really feels all that central to the experience; it unravels at such a slow pace and with its details often hidden away that only the observant will really find much of note in it.

As such the game really relies on your own personal desire, and if you're likely to find great satisfaction in exploration or building up millions of Credits – in whichever method you've opted for – then *Elite Dangerous* will definitely scratch

that itch for a time. Controls-wise, enough has been done to port the game from PC successfully and, though fiddly at first, it becomes possible to control every aspect quickly and effectively. This always-connected online world, too, seems a little barren – a side-effect of a game set in the vastness of space, perhaps, but any sort of interaction with another player can be rare, and that's a damn shame. What's left is a game that really requires personal motivation from yourself, and without that it just doesn't quite offer enough to appeal to a majority.

✕ ADAM BARNES

VERDICT

A fantastic experience for those with a love of space exploration, but lacks the variety of compelling and significant things to do that a modern audience really requires.



X-ONE scored 7 for
Elite Dangerous

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
ActivisionDEVELOPER
Platinum GamesGAME TYPE
ActionPLAYERS
1PRICE
£39.99/\$49.99DLC
N/AACHIEVEMENT
DIFFICULTY
HardNEED TO
UNLOCK
Catch this!
(30G)

IN BRIEF

It's Transformers, so you should know how this works by now: Megatron and the Decepticons threaten earth once again and it is up to Optimus Prime and the rest of the Autobots to stop them.

TRANSFORMERS DEVASTATION

www.transformersgame.com
[/platinumgames](https://www.facebook.com/platinumgames)
[@platinumgames](https://twitter.com/platinumgames)

Rise Of The Dark Spark is forgiven

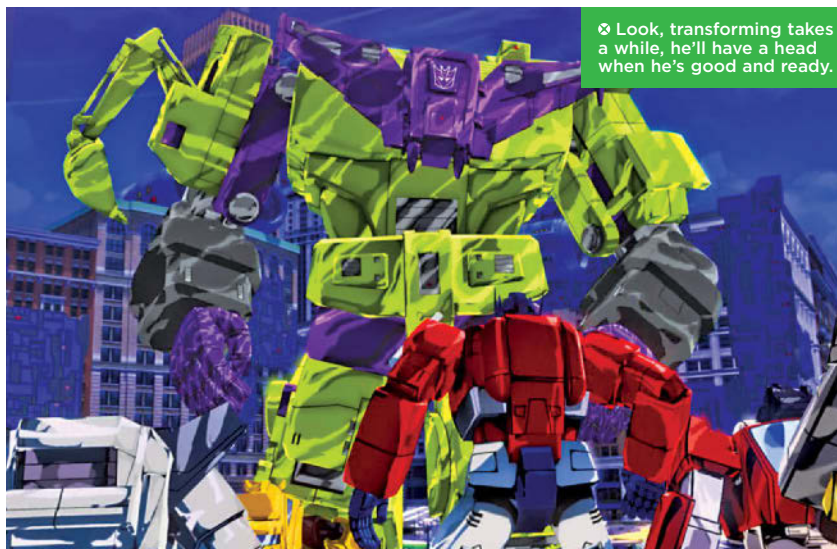


We're not quite sure who *Transformers: Devastation* is aimed at: being a kid's cartoon, you'd naturally assume

it's aimed at children, but the Generation 1-inspired visuals are clearly there for the nostalgic pang they elicit in anyone who grew up watching the cartoon in the late Eighties and early Nineties. That split is also evident in the way that the game plays. It falls somewhere between being a simple brawler and the kind of highly technical action game for which developer Platinum is famed. It is perhaps something of a confused game, then, but that apparent desire to appeal to everyone doesn't necessarily work against it.

Transformers: Devastation is essentially *Bayonetta*-lite. It is structured in the same way in that you progress through the game by taking out all the enemies that confront you within a confined combat arena (though those arenas are sometimes broken up by short driving sections). It shares some of the same mechanics too – one of the most important moves, for example, is a dodge that, when timed correctly, slows time, giving you an opportunity to counter your enemy. The difference here is this game is far more forgiving with its timing, both in terms of putting combos together and dodging enemy attacks. This gives it a nice balance. It is far more accessible than *Bayonetta* – which feels appropriate for a game that's based on a cartoon about transforming robots punching each other – but it is challenging enough, particularly during boss battles, to keep you engaged.

It must be said that it is clear that this is a game developed on a budget. You are sent back and forth over the same small areas in the first half of the game, and when you do move to a new location, you are funnelled down corridors that connect featureless open areas that all look the same. It is also a short game: it can comfortably be finished in four or five hours. But you know what? Being short doesn't really hurt *Devastation*. It ensures the pace is kept high, with the boss battles against iconic characters – the best part of the game – rolling on thick



Look, transforming takes a while, he'll have a head when he's good and ready.

A boss rush section where you repeat key conflicts while fighting alongside your fellow Autobots is one of the game's best moments.

"The pace is kept high, with the boss battles rolling on thick and fast"

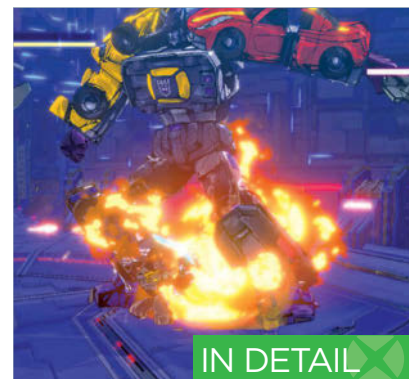
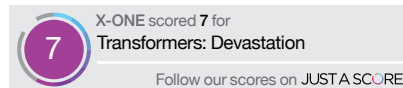


and fast. Challenges and unlockable characters mean that replayability is there if you want it, but for us, five hours felt about right for a quick hit of enjoyable action in a game that represents one of the better interpretations of the cartoon.

PAUL WALKER-EMIG

VERDICT

It's unquestionably B-tier in terms of production values, but, some questionable driving sections aside, that doesn't stop *Transformers: Devastation* being a lot of fun.



IN DETAIL

GOING OLD SKOOL

You can't fault the game when it comes to replicating the style of the original cartoon – it's pure nostalgia for Eighties kids.

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE

GUITAR HERO LIVE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Freestyle Games

GAME TYPE
Rhythmic awesomeness

PLAYERS
1-10

PRICE
£79.99/\$99.99

DLC
No

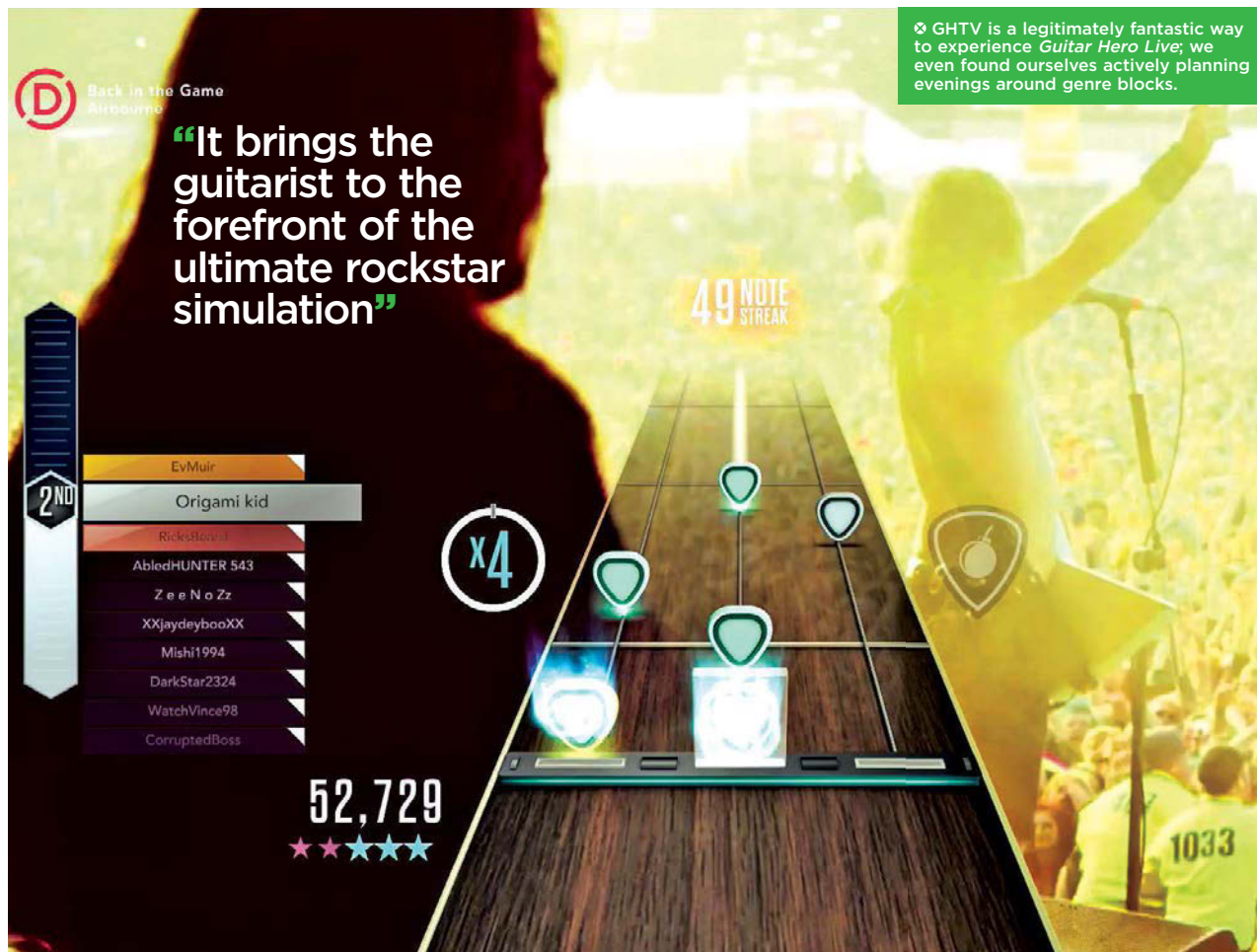
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
Day - Play GHTV For 24 Hours (24G)

IN BRIEF

Guitar Hero returns after five years in rehab, giving Freestyle Games – the studio behind *DJ Hero* – the time and space to develop a kickass revolution to rhythm-based score attack games.

ALSO ON
XBOX 360



✱ GHTV is a legitimately fantastic way to experience *Guitar Hero Live*; we even found ourselves actively planning evenings around genre blocks.

GUITAR HERO LIVE

guitarhero.com/uk/en [f /GuitarHero](https://www.facebook.com/GuitarHero) [@GuitarHero](https://twitter.com/GuitarHero)

Hey now, you're a rock star, get your game on, go play



For the vast majority of us would-be rock stars, the opportunity to play music in front of thousands of screaming fans is nothing but a fading dream. But then there's always that first time you step up to the stage in *Guitar Hero Live*. The band takes position and the house lights begin to dim, you get a passing moment to steal a glance at the sprawling crowd before the valve amps whirl into action. The highway swings into view, you strike that first note in a killer riff, and it detonates, erupting the crowd into a hysterical sea of noise and movement. Or into a chorus of disappointment if you ballsed it up; either way, it's enough to bring a tear to the eye of any wannabe musician.

Freestyle Game's incredible reboot of the long defunct *Guitar Hero* franchise is full of these moments, though they are all too brief, at least when it comes to the Live action component. Varied, but frequently anti-rock, set lists seem to

inherently work against the vibe *GHL* is clearly striving to achieve – bringing the guitarist to the forefront of the ultimate rockstar simulation. But that's okay, because you'll spend most of your time engaged with the live TV aspect anyway.

It's here where *Guitar Hero* finally severs its ties to *Rock Band*, making it feel as unique and revolutionary as it did a decade ago. GHTV presents two channels that constantly play music in genre blocks; like MTV used to do before the scene kids ruined it in the early Noughties. Here, the live action backdrops are replaced with music videos, and the presentation is just as strong.

At any time of the day, one of the hundreds of songs available in the catalogue will be playing and you'll instantly join in on the fun; seamlessly competing with other players' high scores worldwide. It's 100 percent radical: and the perfect way to enjoy *Guitar Hero*, discover new music and enjoy your old favourites.

All of these changes and revolutions to the format hinge upon the biggest adjustment: the guitar peripheral now contains six fret buttons aligned across two colour-coded adjacent rows. It simulates real guitar in a number of ways; with advanced songs even introducing basic chord shapes and progressions. The new difficulty curve is enticing; offering veteran roadies and newbies alike an entirely engaging way to experience music, not to mention experience a slick new approach to score attack gaming.

✱ JOSH WEST

VERDICT

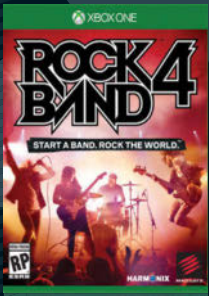
Guitar Hero Live has been designed with love for those that live their lives in the minutes between track lists. Clever progressions to the core concept and incredible longevity make this a must-own.



X-ONE scored 9 for
Guitar Hero Live

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Mad CatzDEVELOPER
HarmonixGAME TYPE
Pure party experiencePLAYERS
1-4PRICE
£229.99/
\$249.99DLC
Yes - A
nauseating
amount of DLCACHIEVEMENT
DIFFICULTY
ModerateNEED TO
UNLOCK
Rock Band Fan
(30G)

IN BRIEF

Rock Band returns after five years in rehab, letting you grab a hold of your old DLC, old instruments and run wild in a frighteningly familiar experience.

ROCK BAND 4

harmonixmusic.com/games/rock-band
[/RockBand](https://www.facebook.com/RockBand)
[@RockBand](https://twitter.com/RockBand)

It's been a long time since we rock and rolled



When it comes to rock 'n' roll, there's a clear divide between the intentions of the old guard and the aspirations of the

new. It's an aspect of music culture that's now being successfully reflected in videogames. If *Guitar Hero Live* represents the new kids on the scene - drawing on influences and iterating on them with brazen ferocity for a new generation - then *Rock Band 4* is the old guard, dusting off instruments and heading out on a reunion tour for one last shot in the spotlight.

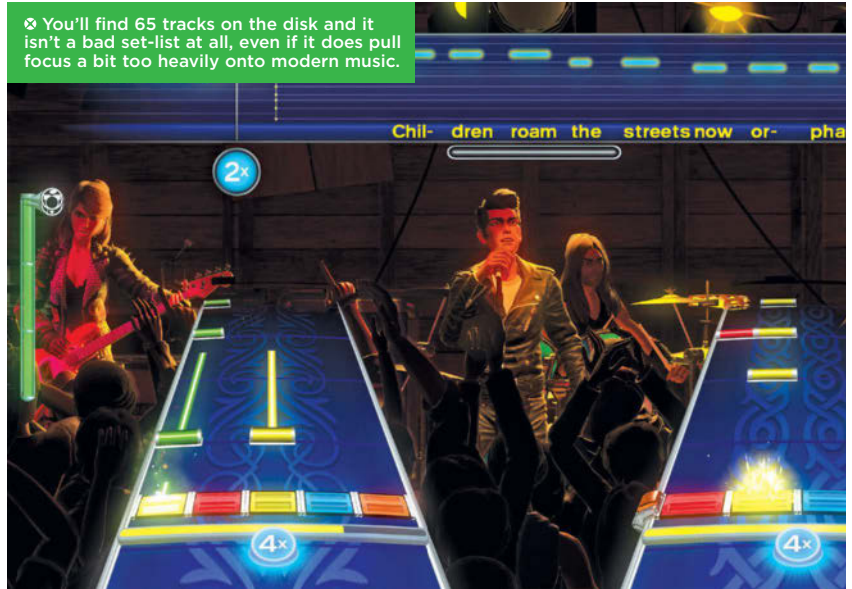
Rock Band 4 isn't so much a sequel, but a casual reminder that you dumped fistfuls of dollars into DLC a few years ago and it isn't lost and forgotten just because you've trashed your Xbox 360. This is a back to basics approach to entering the party zone: the focus on gathering your friends, using frantic clicks to replicate your favourite tunes harmoniously, and then apologising to your neighbour about that bastard kick-pedal in the morning.

And so *Rock Band 4* plays much like *Rock Band 3* before it, and there's a disappointing familiarity to the presentation and style. But that's okay, because *Rock Band* was never one for the posers - in spite of it literally causing you to pose like a rockstar - it was about the music. It's this aspect of *Rock Band 4* that shines through strongest.

There may be fewer instruments available, but there are better ways to use them, thanks to a focus on freestyle. Many of the tracks challenge you to improvise within the confines of existing music; ripping solos and vocally warping tracks that have stood the test of time. It introduces something we've never really had here before: a sense of agency over songs. There's an opportunity to be effortlessly creative and it's immensely satisfying.

What isn't quite as satisfying, however, are the changes made to career mode. While it's fun being able to shape the path of your band's rise through stardom - a sort of choose your own adventure-lite experience - there are some head-scratching omissions from *Rock Band 3* that would have worked well here. No longer are you able to plaster everything with custom band logos or assign custom characters to your entourage, for example; almost insignificant features that would have really sold the idea that you're building something new from scratch. Odd omissions take a severe turn, with custom set-lists, practice mode and

✖ You'll find 65 tracks on the disk and it isn't a bad set-list at all, even if it does pull focus a bit too heavily onto modern music.



"This is a back to basics approach to entering the party zone"

✖ The new instruments vary in quality. While the drums are far more solid than before, the guitar feels a little cheap.

synchronous online multiplayer all cut from the package - all seemingly at the expense of Party Mode, which lets you seamlessly move between tracks with a voting system.

✖ JOSH WEST

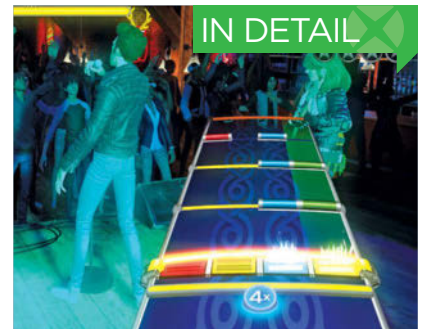
VERDICT

Rock Band 4 is familiar, but it's also strangely refreshing. Harmonix has once again positioned itself as the king of local multiplayer, but that might not be enough for some would-be musicians.

7 X-ONE scored 7 for Rock Band 4

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](http://JUSTAScore.com)

IN DETAIL



INACCESSIBLE DLC

■ Retrieving your old DLC is a gigantic pain in the arse, so if you have a lot of it, prepare to waste a lot of time scrolling through menus.

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER
inXile Entertainment

GAME TYPE
Post-apocalyptic RPG throwback

PLAYERS
1

PRICE
£31.99/\$39.99

DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

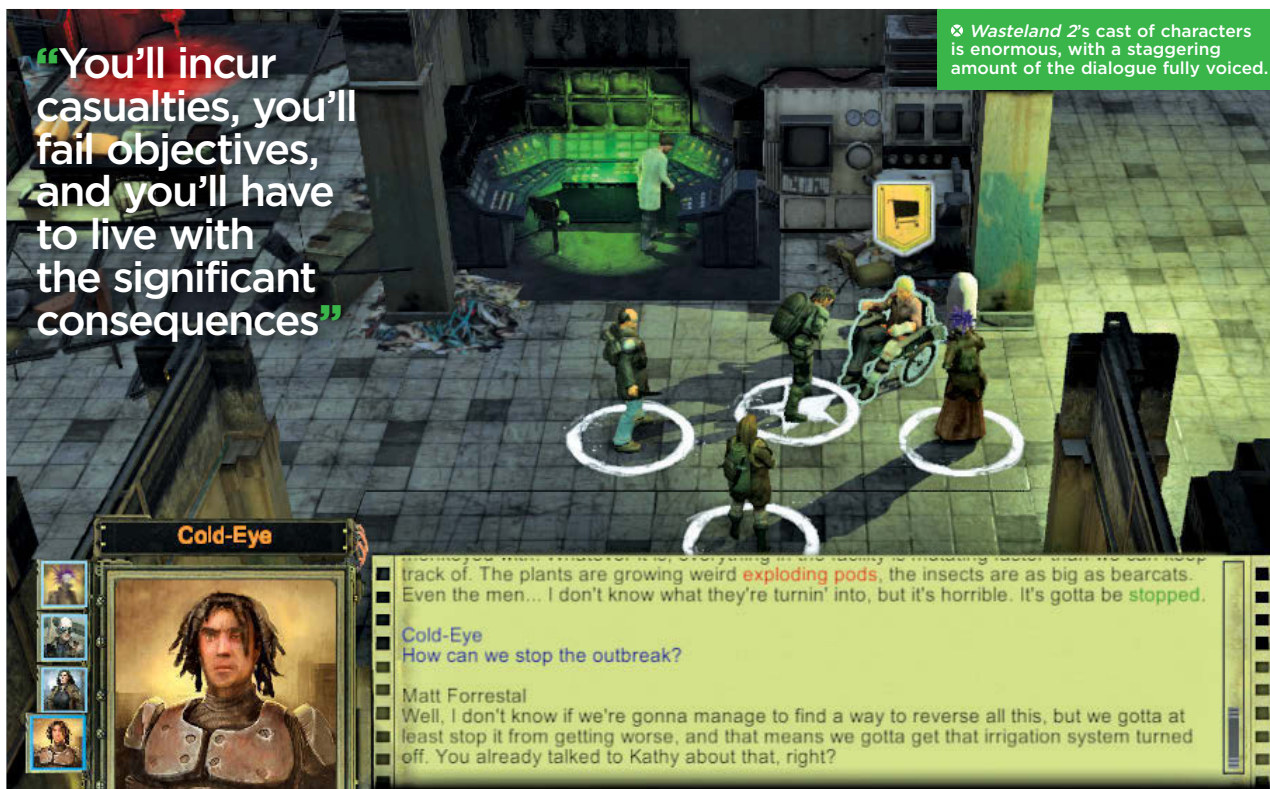
NEED TO UNLOCK
Not Monkeying Around (15G)

IN BRIEF

Last year's long-awaited and much lauded retro RPG sequel gets a shiny new lick of console paint and some streamlined gamepad controls to go along with its strategic turn-based combat and mammoth post-apocalyptic adventure.

"You'll incur casualties, you'll fail objectives, and you'll have to live with the significant consequences"

✕ *Wasteland 2's* cast of characters is enormous, with a staggering amount of the dialogue fully voiced.



WASTELAND 2 DIRECTOR'S CUT

🏠 wasteland.inxile-entertainment.com [/Ranger.HQ](https://www.facebook.com/Ranger.HQ) [@Brian Fargo](https://twitter.com/Brian Fargo)

'I will show you fear in a handful of dust'



Post-apocalyptic dustbowls are rarely welcoming, but *Wasteland 2's* is even less hospitable than most. An upgraded port of RPG godfather Brian Fargo's Kickstarter-funded sequel, *Wasteland 2: Director's Cut* arrives on Xbox One a year after the original's PC debut, and retains its thoroughly uncompromising take on life as a Desert Ranger.

Wasteland 2 doesn't care if you forgot to pop a stim pack after your last scrape with a synth, or reload your weapon before running into a pack of raiders on the way to your destination. If you're sloppy, and you don't take the utmost care of your (completely customisable) Ranger squad, you'll incur casualties, you'll fail objectives, and you'll have to live with the significant consequences.

Which is all part of the fun, naturally. Each of the dozens of missions in *Wasteland 2* can be accomplished in a number of ways, or failed outright, and the flexibility afforded to players combined with the variety of outcomes

available lends considerable weight to even the most trivial decisions. There are plenty of desperate souls for you to save, but you'll think long and hard before putting your team in the firing line.

The game's grid-based combat has seen a few enhancements this time out, notably a V.A.T.S.-like Precision Strike system, but by and large the gameplay in *Wasteland 2* remains untouched. You'll still flick between navigating brilliantly-scripted dialogue trees and engaging in deeply strategic but brutally uncompromising turn-based skirmishes, and both still offer myriad possibilities based on your squad's build and skillset.

The *Director's Cut's* much vaunted graphical overhaul is also noticeable, with the game's textures, environments and character models having been entirely rebuilt in Unity, but it's more of a necessary facelift than anything. Other presentational aspects however, such as the 8,000 new lines of voiced dialogue, go a long way towards making the game's already excellent writing come to life.

Unfortunately, the transition to console has also brought its fair share of bugs. Pathfinding and inventory issues cropped up frequently, and occasionally doors would refuse to open at all. We were never prevented from progressing in the main game because of this, but there were at least a couple of side missions that we had to abandon simply because they were inaccessible. These hitches can be glaring, but the reason they stand out is that everything else here is so great. *Wasteland 2's* storytelling is engaging, its combat nuanced but formidable, and the overall experience is hugely rewarding.

✕ **ROSS HAMILTON**

VERDICT

Wasteland 2: Director's Cut is the definitive version of a rich and brilliantly unforgiving game. It's an outstanding update of the old-school RPG formula, albeit one marred by technical issues.

8

X-ONE scored 8 for *Wasteland 2: Director's Cut*

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](http://JUSTAScore.com)

QUALITY. INNOVATION. RESPECT

www.gamesm.co.uk



games™

Available
from all good
newsagents and
supermarkets

ON SALE NOW

■ INSIDE FALLOUT 4 ■ BLACK OPS III VERDICT ■ HALO 5 TESTED



BUY YOUR ISSUE TODAY

Print edition available at www.imagineshop.co.uk

Digital edition available at www.greatdigitalmags.com

Available on the following platforms



facebook.com/gamesTM



twitter.com/gamesTMmag

XBOX ONE



PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Full-body workout

PLAYERS
1-6

PRICE
£39.99/\$49.99

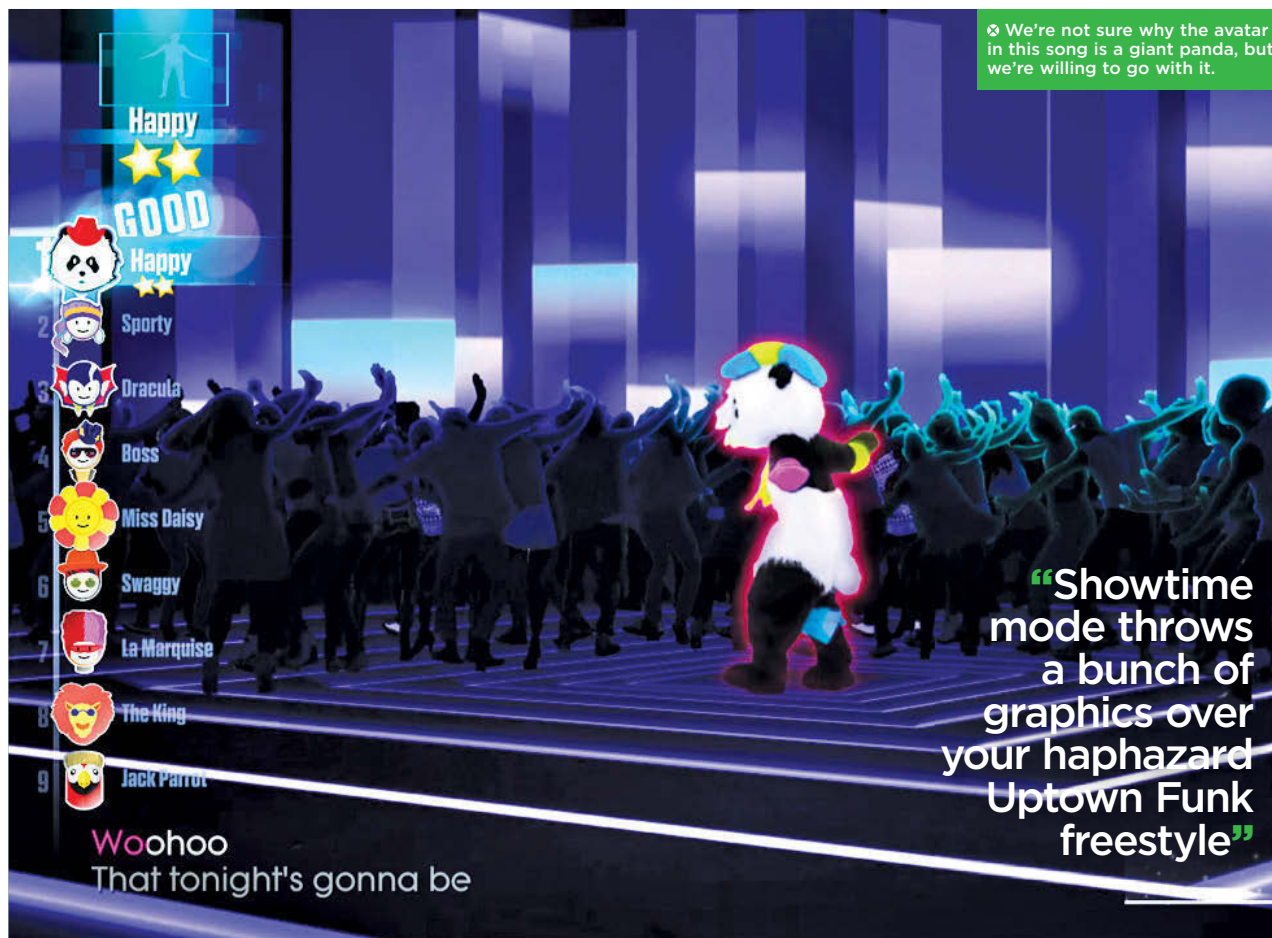
DLC
A Just Dance Unlimited pass grants you access to a large catalogue of additional songs

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Take All Comers (50G)

IN BRIEF

Flail your body around with some semblance of rhythm to a number of peppy pop songs and try to score as many points as possible while looking like a huge prat. No Kinect required!



“Showtime mode throws a bunch of graphics over your haphazard Uptown Funk freestyle”

JUST DANCE 2016

just-dance.ubi.com /justdancegame @justdancegame

Now where did we leave that Kinect?



It's that time of year again when the annualised sequels start coming thick and fast, and while *Just Dance 2016* flies under

the radar in comparison to some of this autumn's more high-profile releases, Ubisoft's motion-controlled juggernaut is as big a game as any when it comes to pleasing the significant casual Xbox-owning crowd.

2016's edition retains the core *Just Dance* gameplay – it's decidedly not broken – offering both smartphone and Kinect control options, and opts for refinement and new content over any innovation of note. If you've enjoyed throwing yourself about in front of the TV with a few friends before then chances are you'll enjoy it again here.

For those who haven't sampled the *Just Dance* formula previously, however, 2016 offers a sparkling introduction. Quite literally, in fact – everything in this game, from the menus to the on-screen lyrics appears to have been doused in

glitter. The song selection is a strong mix of dance-pop hits (Jason Derulo, Katy Perry, you get the idea) and classic sing-a-long tunes (*Copacabana* anyone?), the interface has been cleaned up and streamlined, and the overall presentation in the game's dance numbers is pretty excellent. Kinect body detection can be iffy with multiple people spinning, thrusting and shuffling at once, and you occasionally get the impression that the game is randomly assigning your score as it goes along, but then *Just Dance* has never really been about chasing meticulously recorded high scores: *Dance Dance Revolution* it is not.

There are a handful of new additions to the Xbox One version of the game, the most notable being Showtime – a karaoke video-making mode that throws a bunch of graphics over your haphazard Uptown Funk freestyle – and Dance Quests, which are three-song challenges played against a field of AI opponents. And then there's Just Dance Unlimited – a subscription service that features an

additional 156 songs to the 43 included on the disc, with more being added.

The game includes a free one-month pass to the Unlimited service, which is certainly a bonus, but if you're only coming back to *Just Dance* every once in a while when you've got a few friends over then it feels frustrating to have to fork out for the 'full' package. Nevertheless, if you do decide to take the plunge then Unlimited turns *Just Dance 2016* into a pretty definitive dance title. It's gaudy, it'll make you look silly, but it's impossible not to smile while playing.

ROSS HAMILTON

VERDICT

This year's *Just Dance* is a party game high on polish, but low on innovation. Still, it's not likely to stop you having a lot of fun with your friends, as long as they don't mind looking like idiots.

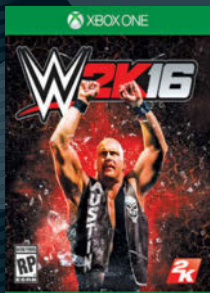


X-ONE scored 7 for
Just Dance 2016

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K SportsDEVELOPER
Visual ConceptsGAME TYPE
WrestlingPLAYERS
1-4PRICE
£54.99/\$59.99DLC
The Season
Pass is £19.99ACHIEVEMENT
DIFFICULTY
EasyNEED TO
UNLOCK
Mr. Money In
The Bank (70G)

IN BRIEF

The return of the yearly wrestling game calls itself, for some reason, 'a Spike Lee joint' and re-focuses on delivering that hammy wrestling narrative to fans

WWE 2K16

www.2k.com [/wwgames](https://www.facebook.com/wwgames) [@wwgames](https://twitter.com/wwgames)

Bah Gawd!



Last year's *WWE* offering was so bad – so underwhelming and lacking – that any kind of follow-up was bound to be better.

That's lucky for 2K16, because as slipshod as it is, it's still a damn sight better than what we had to put up with last year.

There have been a few tweaks to the rusting mechanics of the game, but they're tweaks that save the game from feeling like a simulation and push it more into the realms of, well, wrestling. Reversals have been debuffed, though: they now require a cooldown timer to use, so you can't just spam them and counter everyone's moves like some sort of ridiculous villain. Thanks to a bar that counts down depending on how powerful your moves are, you've got to balance aggression with fatigue – it's a new level of micromanagement the *WWE* series has missed for the last few entries, and you know what? It feels good. It works.

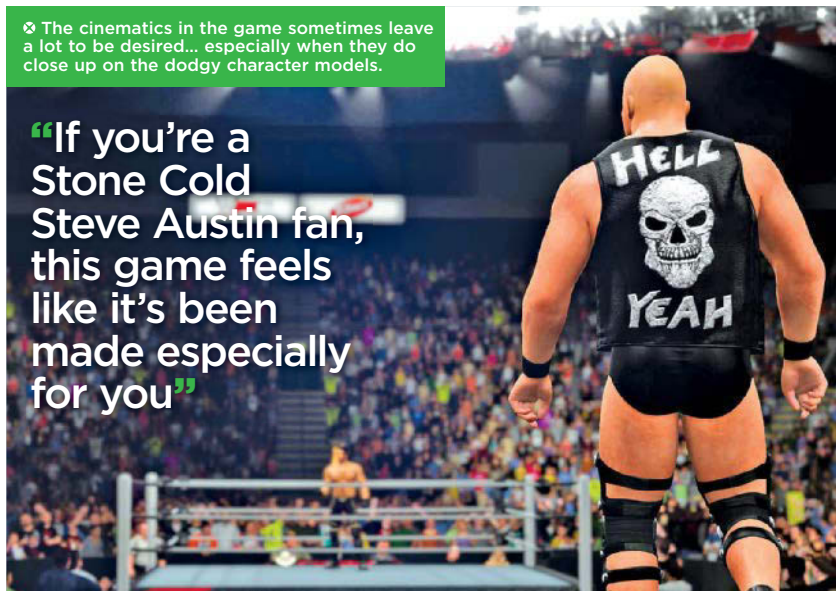
The all-important creation suite returns, and it's as easy to make a wrestler in your own image than before. It's lacking the Create-A-Finisher move, but with 120 characters' movesets to choose from, that's less a glaring omission and more an oversight. There are some nice touches when it comes to in-match production values – cutaways and audio feel authentic, and despite there only being a handful of commentary clips you'll hear over and over and over again in custom match-ups, everything feels as (kind of) real as it should.

When it comes to graphics, we can't believe this is a game that released in 2015. The skin textures – which you'll be seeing a lot of, naturally – and mannequin-esque and pale. The leathers and cloths look weird and always semi-damp, and the clipping and collision detection when it comes to things like objects and ringside ropes break any illusion of reality the game might occasionally reach. It's a shame – the graphics somehow make the cumbersome handling feel worse, although once we got used to how 'underwater' everything felt, we didn't mind it that much.

But let's be honest – this is a game that exists for fan service. And there's a lot of that in there: the developer has even gone to the effort of getting Jim Ross and Jerry Lawler to rerecord their soundbites following Austin's career. That's big – and if you're a Stone Cold Steve Austin fan, there's so much in this

✖ The cinematics in the game sometimes leave a lot to be desired... especially when they do close up on the dodgy character models.

"If you're a Stone Cold Steve Austin fan, this game feels like it's been made especially for you"



✖ One of our favourite things to do has been make each other in-game, then let the computer AI beat us up... honestly, it's hilarious.



game that feels like it's been made especially for you. Despite its flaws, we can't take that kind of dedication away from this compartmentalised 'let's do everything' *WWE* instalment.

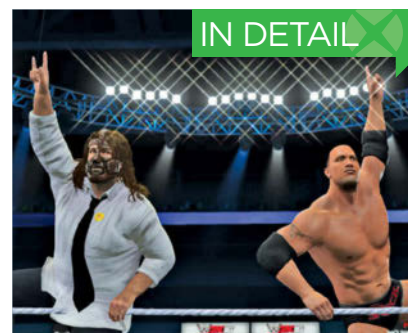
✖ DOM PEPPIATT

VERDICT

Not the most technically impressive of games, but if you're a wrestling fan looking to go head-to-head with your favourite personalities, you could do a lot worse. It's still a pretty good all-round package.

X-ONE scored 7 for
WWE2K16Follow our scores on [JUSTAScore](http://JUSTAScore.com)

IN DETAIL



IN YOUR DREAMS

■ With a roster of 120 characters (plus bonus legacy costumes and so on) there are tons of fantasy matchups to play.



PRO TIPS

Your complete guide to *Elite Dangerous*



LIVE

Our full review of *Metal Gear Solid Online*



SOCIAL

We talk to the team behind *Guitar Hero Live*



IN-DEPTH

Awesome *Metal Gear Solid V* easter eggs



DLC

Elder Scrolls Online leads our round-up



HIGHLIGHT

Ten essential ID@Xbox titles for your Xbox One

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ELITE DANGEROUS



MAKE TRAVELLING THROUGH THE DEPTHS OF SPACE AS EASY AS POSSIBLE WITH THESE TIPS...



You'd might think a game about flying through space would be a little simpler to pick up, but look at this way – it quite literally *is* rocket science. As vast and compelling as *Elite Dangerous* is, that barrier to entry might be far more off-putting than it ought to be. Everything from successful

trading, zero-gravity dogfights and even properly navigating around the Milky Way are initially quite tricky to learn – and truth be told the tutorials out there aren't all that great. That's why we're here, then, to give you the leg up you need to see you on your merry way and to truly make the most out of what can be an utterly compelling game.

BEST SHIPS FOR TRADERS



The obvious upgrade is to your cargo hold, since the more you can carry the more you can sell. However, don't forget the importance of armour, shields and weapons – traders are common targets for pirates. If you want to only focus on trading then the Hauler is an early starting ship you'll want, eventually upgrading to the Type-6, -7 and -9 for their huge cargo space. Remember these ships aren't all that manoeuvrable, though; combat could be tricky without a strong defence.

BEST SHIPS FOR MINERS



If you want to go direct when it comes to trading, then you'll need a mining laser minimum – otherwise you won't be able to destroy the asteroids containing the ore. A Cobra Mk III will be a good choice of ship for initial miners, since it has a good cargo size and can be equipped with the Class 2 mining laser. Outside of that, an on-board refinery will convert the ore, while Collector and Prospector Drones will help you significantly cut down the effort of mining.



BEST SHIPS FOR BOUNTY HUNTERS



As a bounty hunter you should naturally be prepared for combat and so the Asp, Cobra or Viper are all good bases to aim for, adding in all the weapons, shields and extras to help make destroying a target as easy as possible. You'll also want to grab a Kill Warrant Scanner – to find ships with bounties on them –

while the added bonus of a Frame Shift Wake Scanner will assist in tracking down any marks that try to escape your clutches. To that end, a Frame Shift Drive Interdictor will be important to drag players out of supercruise, while upgrading your own ship's speed will help chase any bounties looking to run away.

BEST SHIPS FOR EXPLORERS



These players *must* upgrade their fuel tank, while a scoop for gathering fuel by flying close to a sun will help you survive where there are no stations. Equipping a Discovery Scanner is vital to make money from your travels, while a Detailed Surface Scanner will

add a little more to your earnings. Potential ship models for an explorer would be the Diamondback Explorer, Asp Explorer or the Adder for their high fuel capacity and light jump distances when upgraded – but keep some laser hardpoints for a little security.

BEST SHIPS FOR PIRATES



Ships like the Python, Cobra Mk III or Asp Explorer are good for pirates thanks to their high cargo capacity, but don't forget your arsenal of weapons and shields, too. As with bounty hunters, a Frame Shift Drive Interdictor can be useful to force other commanders into a combat

situation, while a Cargo Scanner is important to find out whether or not your potential target is even worth the effort. Hatch Breaker Drones are imperative to cracking open a ship's hold, too, while a Collector Drone makes gathering up the treasure a doddle.

5 QUICK TIPS FOR FTL TRAVEL

Getting from A to B isn't all that well explained, which can make the process a little awkward to get to grips with. Knowledge is power, however, so here's how to engage in faster-than-light travel.

PICK A DESTINATION



Start by choosing where you want to travel to by first selecting the system from the Galaxy Map and then filtering down to the System Map and choosing a point of interest – probably a space station.

HYPERSPACE TRAVEL



Initiate hyperspace by holding Y and pressing D-Pad down (if you're not mass locked to a station), where it will charge before blasting off. Use hyperspace to travel to different systems.

SWITCH TO SUPERCruise



Once you reach your final system destination you'll then need to use supercruise (Y and up) to travel to your point of interest. Supercruise has a manually adjustable speed, so keep accelerating.

WATCH YOUR SPEED



As you approach your destination you'll see its distance (in lightseconds) decrease as you speed up, and a dynamic estimated timer of arrival. Once you're within 30 seconds you'll want to start slowing down.

STOP CAREFULLY



The tricky part is slowing down. You'll need to carefully regulate your speed so that you can come out of supercruise safely (you'll receive a notice) without overshooting your target. Press Y to exit supercruise.

TRADING 101

The first rule of trading is to avoid buying willy-nilly; look for low demand items or rare products and stock up on those. Similarly, don't just sell at the next station you visit – if the demand isn't much higher the sale price won't be much higher. To that end you should avoid putting all your eggs in one cargo hold; trade in multiple types of goods to ensure no journeys are wasted. Lastly, check out the category of stations your trading with and match the goods they'd need: ore from an extraction station, for example, will have a high demand and price at high tech or industrial stations.



**EYES ON THE MAP**

The central portion of your cockpit provides details on the very immediate status of your ship, from the map in the middle – pinpointing different targets and points of interest – to the running temperature, available fuel and damage to your hull.

KNOW YOUR COCKPIT

**HOLD DOWN THE BUTTONS**

This opens different other sub-menus: these are important – like the Galaxy Map or retractable landing gear – and are categorised around function, so make sure you familiarise yourself with them.

LOOK LEFT

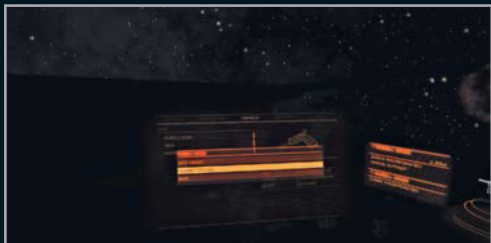
Looking left will make the Contacts panel appear. Think of this as a means of monitoring other ships, stations and other such elements – essentially this is a way to check the status of and interact with any object in your near vicinity.

LOOK RIGHT

The right-hand panel is your own personal status, with info on your ship's different parts, the contents of your hold and even the reputation and status of the different factions in the universe. A good captain knows how their ship is faring.

SAFE LANDING

YOU'LL BE SURPRISED HOW TRICKY IT IS TO DOCK WITH A STATION...

1: REQUEST DOCKING

It's something of a pain, but before you attempt to dock with a station you'll need to request docking. Find the station in your Contacts panel and then select it; you'll have a couple of options, the one you want is obviously 'Request Docking'. It'll be accepted immediately if you're less than 7.5km away and your ship can actually fit inside.

2: APPROACH YOUR DESIGNATED PAD

Once accepted you'll be given a timer and allocated a landing pad. You need to dock before the timer ends. Approach it within that time and line yourself up – try to keep it as straight as possible to make it easier for you to actually land the damn thing. It might take a while for you to get good at this, though.

3: RETRACT THE LANDING GEAR

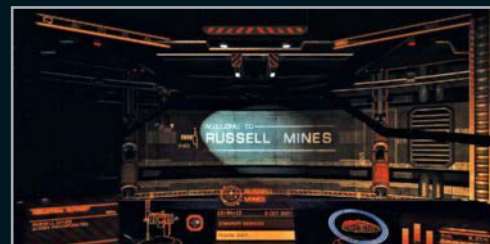
Select the necessary option to lower your ship's landing gear once you're close to the pad. This is necessary for the docking to work (otherwise you'll bounce off it) but it'll actually limit your maximum speed, preventing you from accidentally applying too much throttle and smashing into the station itself.

4: LINE UP YOUR SHIP

This is a flight simulator, so there is still some realism involved. You're going to want to position your ship so its heading (as much as you can, anyway) for the centre of the pad, preferably parallel within the square. Increase the throttle slightly to draw yourself forward, initiating the landing sensor.

5: GUIDE YOURSELF IN

Once you're close enough, you'll start hearing a beeping – kind of like a car's parking sensor – and your map will now display a hologram of your own vehicle. Aim to turn the pivot point blue by staying in the centre. Use this as a way of aligning your spacecraft so it's flat and pointing straight ahead, too.

6: LOWER THE VEHICLE

Use the right-stick to move the ship left and right horizontally to get the perfect position. Once you're properly aligned, slowly move the right-stick down to lower the craft onto the pad – make sure this is done *slowly*. If successful the autopilot will kick in and docking will proceed, if not, you'll hit the station and have to try again.

TIPS & TRICKS

DOG EAT DOG



Dogfighting isn't easy. Your first thoughts will be to cut the engines when doing a complete U-turn, but in space that doesn't actually work all that well – with no thrust you'll find it tough to turn at all. Keep some speed and then boost back up once you've got your enemy in your sights. Be prepared to turn quickly, however, since they may be gearing up to evade instead of running straight. And if you're the one at a disadvantage, consider slowing to reverse, ideally having them zip right past you and putting you in control.

THE BULLETINS



Most stations will feature Bulletin Boards, and early on these are important to browse every time. Initially you won't have the tools to take on many of them so you'll need to be picky, sticking with trade routes. But they're a good way of earning Credits early on, so check them often. Not completing an accepted mission will negatively affect your reputation with the relevant faction – not a huge deal, but worth considering. Their availability is limited too, so try not to let a profitable one slip by.

MAPPING THE ROUTE



With thousands of galactic systems to travel to, the trick is to find anchor points. Because you will explore the galaxy in all directions it's harder to find those that are 'above' and 'below' your current position. Using anchor points resets the map view at the 'height' of the newly selected system, unveiling more anchors closer to the new position. Just a brief amount of exploration like this will highlight just how vast *Elite Dangerous* is. Remember, using the Galaxy Map will let you track trade routes between systems.

WEAPONRY DETAILED

FIXED



As the word suggests, these weapons don't move and have limited abilities to track enemy ships. They often don't use much in the way of your ship's power, but also shoot straight ahead – they rely on your agility.

GIMBAL



These can move independently of your ship's direction, and can keep track of enemy ships even when you're not pointed at them. They're easier to use, but weaker as a result – and can be disrupted by chaff.

TURRET



These are more like optional extras – not all ships can equip a turret. They can be set to fire-at-will (targeting enemies automatically), to shoot at manually set targets or in fixed position – acting like fixed weapons.

ENERGY VERSUS KINETIC



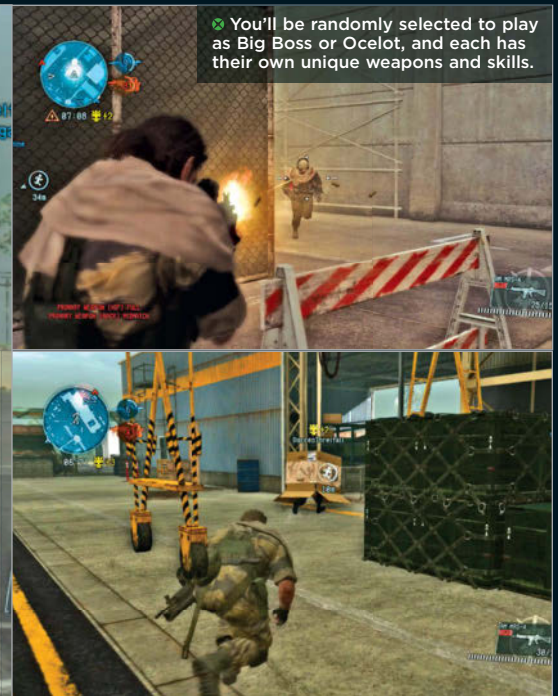
Energy weapons drain power quicker, deal damage to shields better and don't require ammo. Kinetic weapons use up ammo and need to be replenished, and damage armour better than shields.



REVIEW



✔ Fulton-lifting an enemy out of the battleground is the ultimate way to mark your superiority in *MGO*.



✔ You'll be randomly selected to play as Big Boss or Ocelot, and each has their own unique weapons and skills.

METAL GEAR ONLINE

Does The Phantom Pain still linger?

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
In-house

PRICE
Free

GAME REQUIRED
MGS V: The Phantom Pain



In many ways, *Metal Gear Online* is one of the most enjoyable online experiences of the year. Sure, it's fraught with connection issues, balancing problems and lack of server population; but its back-to-basics approach to multiplayer is refreshing. With three game modes, three character classes and a handful of maps, *MGO* takes the great gunplay and stealth mechanics from *The Phantom Pain* into the realms of tight 8v8 arenas.

That core gameplay is bloody enjoyable; as long as you can get into a game, you're almost certain to have a great time. Movement is fluid, combat handles exactly as it did in the base *Phantom Pain* experience and the glory that is the FOX engine makes for some incredible

“So long as you can get into a game, you're almost certain to have a great time”

moments. All of that training you did in the forty-plus hours in single-player pays off. Stealth, in particular, brings with it a natural rush of adrenaline when used correctly; successfully CQCing an enemy will give you an opportunity to Fulton them out of the map and to a respawn screen for bonus points.

It's just a shame then, that *MGO* has been shown less love by Konami than the ending of *The Phantom*

Pain. The three gameplay modes are fairly basic: Comm Control being a straightforward Domination game type, Bounty Hunter has you extracting enemies with the Fulton device and generally murdering anyone that steps out into the open, while Cloak and Dagger is essentially Capture The Flag. All three are fun in their own right, but they are a bit too familiar.

This isn't helped by the fact that there are major balancing issues between the three classes, and that being able to switch between them requires a significant levelling commitment. Nor is it helped by the fact that the servers are as bad as they were back in the *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsidence* days. There's a serious lack of servers – thanks to the game seemingly being P2P based – and a lack of population

already. The biggest issue here is that if the host of a lobby gets disconnected, which happens often, everyone gets booted out with no XP or rewards. It's so frustrating, given how far online shooters have come in the last decade.

But that all said, there's no bigger thrill than spawning into a map as Big Boss, the original *MGS* music thundering through our ears as we break between cover while under fire. Bursting from cardboard boxes with tranq gun in hand, Fulton-lifting unsuspecting enemies off into the sky, and sitting with a smile imagining how pissed off someone across the world is at that moment. There's a lot to love in *MGO*, but unless Konami starts putting some major support behind the mode, it might not survive the year.

✔ **JOSH WEST**

CRISIS MODE

It looks like, sadly, the future of *Metal Gear Online* could be facing crisis already after its developer – Konami Los Angeles Studio – has been shut down. This means that development, updates and support has been transferred back to Konami proper,



though with creator Hideo Kojima out the door, things aren't looking good for *Metal Gear* in *The Phantom Pain* aftermath. What this means for the future of *MGO* isn't clear, but it might be worth getting your fill now before it is too late.

VERDICT

Metal Gear Online is fun in small doses as a back to basics approach to online shooters, though a lack of content will undoubtedly upset and annoy some.

X-ONE scored 7 for
Metal Gear Online

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**



POST MORTEM GUITAR HERO LIVE

Discussing Guitar Hero's insane new reboot with Freestyle Games' creative director Jamie Jackson

JAMIE JACKSON

CREATIVE DIRECTOR,
FREESTYLE GAMES

"If there's a track no-one is playing, then we don't put any more of that in there"

■ It seems a lot of consumers have misunderstood the basic premise of *Guitar Hero Live*, can you break it down for us?

We wanted to build a platform that was about content delivery – we thought, when we came up with [*GH Live*], 'How can we deliver stuff to our players without doing another box, without making another disc? From a design perspective, that's where it began.

That led to the creation of GHTV [a mode in the game that continuously streams music, with channels for specific genres], this 24/7 platform of music and content that we can add to without ever affecting you, the player. You never have to download stuff – you stream it all. Then we thought, 'What can we build into that as a *game*?' We are putting more modes into GHTV itself later on too, adding even more depth (especially for competitive players).

■ Do you feel that having these varied ways of playing is the best way to cater to the huge

array of musical tastes that your players have?

People do have such diverse tastes in music. If you're making a heavy metal fan play through a soft rock set to get to what they want to play, they get really frustrated by it. They just want to get to what they want to get to. Not [locking] anything away was driven by that idea. If you want, you can just jump straight in and play the songs you want.

■ What sort of music will you be adding in weekly? Will the success of certain channels on GHTV affect this?

Well, GHTV for us needed to be about communicating with our fans. We can really see what people are liking through that. If there's a track that no-one is playing, then we don't put any more of that in there. But if there's one track or a band that everyone's loving, then we can get that in there *really* quickly. The results of how GHTV works shows us what people *really* want – a group of people on social media might say something but when you've got [the telemetry] there saying something else, you know how to cater for your audience.

■ *Guitar Hero Live* has caused some controversy with its microtransaction model, do you think the criticism has been fair?

I guess, in a way, our pay system was inspired by mobile... well, not just that, but how *everything* is changing. Netflix, Spotify – all these different platforms [exist

now] for how we consume things. Mobile in the past five years has completely changed the face of games – if I thought about a free game five years ago I would have said 'Well, how am I going to eat if everyone has my game for free?' It's changed, though, now – some 15/16-year-old kids would find the concept

of paying for a game as alien as having a free game was to me! So, our model was inspired by the face of games and the way they're changing and other media platforms and the way we consume them. I haven't bought a CD in six years, but I'll favourite an album a day on Spotify. ❌



❌ *Guitar Hero* has finally broken away from *Rock Band*, bringing score attack gameplay to the forefront of the experience.



❌ While you never own any of the songs in *Guitar Hero Live*, everything being streamed is a great way to find new music and keep your hard drive clear.

16 MGS V EASTER EGGS

YOU REALLY NEED TO FIND RIGHT NOW

1 Back once again

This cute Easter Egg can be seen simply by taking a break from playing *The Phantom Pain*, if you can imagine doing such a thing. Once you've unlocked D-Dog, don't return for a month (or alter your console's date) and the next time you return you'll be greeted the only way man's best friend knows how.

2 Kojima Productions poster

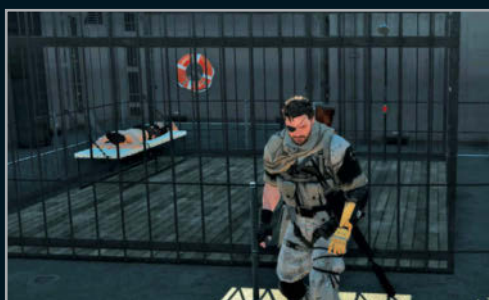


Konami might be hesitant to associate Kojima's name with MGS anymore, but he sneaked it in anyway. During the prologue where Big Boss is

relearning to walk you'll stumble against a notice board – and pinned to it is the artwork for Ground Zeroes with the title 'Kojima Productions'.

4 Songs of praise

If you head over to Quiet's cell on the Medical Platform you'll find her listening to her favourite Eighties tracks. She must have a lot of respect for her captor, though, since you there's a chance you'll hear her listening to 'Snake Eater', the 007-inspired theme tune to *MGS3* and the game that saw our hero shift from Naked Snake to his legendary title of Big Boss.



5 Squeal, little pig

In the cutscene where you first encounter White Mamba – or Eli, as he is properly known – you should spot a pig's head presented on a platter. That in itself is likely a reference to *Lord Of The Flies* (Eli also wears a conch shell), where kids stranded on an island form a savage society, but once you retake control of Big Boss you can actually shoot the pig's head to hear it squeal.



3 Look out below

A classic Kojima secret, this one. Around Mother Base are a series of warnings about falling objects in areas that are under construction – hang around one of these for long enough and you'll find out why those signs are there, replete with comical, cartoon-esque whistle. Should a soldier witness your mishap, too, then their morale will increase.



6 An unlucky dog

Obviously the main characters of *The Phantom Pain* can't be dismissed from Mother Base but there's another recruit – gained from the Side Op Unlucky Dog 01 – that is also a permanent fixture. His name is Ziang Tan, he speaks English, Chinese and Japanese, has the Boaster trait and just so happens to also be the level designer of *MGS V*.





In-depth



7 A nod to PT

Kojima also helped produce *PT* – the *Silent Hills* playable teaser – and though it was only available to those dirty PS4 players we can still find this reference within the Angola-Zaire border. Hidden in a particular tent in the jungle is a radio that, when activated, will recall the chilling murder that is the focus of the *Silent Hills* demo.



8 Mirror image

Here's a neat little secret that you might never have found as it's so subtle. Inside your ACC post-mission, if you angle the camera *just right* you'll spot an ever-so-faint reflection in the window, but this won't be of Big Boss. Instead this will be the face of your custom avatar – your MGO face, essentially – but you'll need to squint to find it.



9 Make a wish

If you happen to play *The Phantom Pain* on your birthday (which you'll have put in at the start of the game) – don't keep reading if you want this to be a surprise! – then you'll be ordered back to base by Kaz under a pretence of urgency. Instead the boys back at base just want you to take a break from battle to celebrate your birthday with a slice of cake and a singsong.



10 Six Million Dollar Boss

You'll have to be of a certain age to have picked up on this reference by yourself. When using one of your upgraded Bionic Arm abilities – such as the running punch or the sonar ability – you will hear a very specific, rattling sound; that's the same SFX from *The Six Million Dollar Man*, a Seventies TV show about an ex-astronaut with bionic implants.



11 La-li-lu-le-lo!?



Ocelot will appear on Mother Base from time to time, and there's all sorts of tricks you can do – from failing to sneak up on him in a cardboard

box to tranquilising him. Do the latter and he'll say some chuckle-worthy comments, even referencing Cipher by another name.

5 REFERENCES TO PAST CHARACTERS

MGS lore experts and series fans, these ones are for you!

PAZ ORTEGA

After *Ground Zeroes* you might be forgiven for thinking Paz is no more. Once you've unlocked the Medical Platform at Mother Base, explore the area for a door you can enter to learn the truth.



THAT'S A LOW BLOW, SNAKE

Blink and you'll miss this reference to Otacon, the scientist Solid Snake meets in *Metal Gear Solid*. During the cutscene at the end of mission 12, look out for a photo on the table to see young Hal.



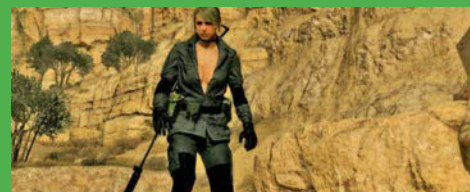
STAR OF BETHLEHEM

At the very start, you'll see a nurse put lilies out – a reference to the final fight in *MGS3* with Boss. Complete the last, hidden mission of *TPP* to collect one to research the Infinity Bandana.



OK HERO, SET ME FREE

Fancy yourself an *MGS* veteran? You'll enjoy this one. Defeat Quiet's introductory mission on Extreme difficulty and you'll unlock a Sniper Wolf costume that you can research and equip.



KOJIMA RETURNS

While Kojima isn't exactly part of *Metal Gear* canon, he earns himself another cameo after appearing in *Ground Zeroes*. There's a VIP side-op you can complete to unlock Kojima as a recruit.



DLC REVIEW

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE: ORSINIUM

Heading to the home of the Orcs

PUBLISHER
Bethesda

DEVELOPER
Zenimax Online Studios

PRICE
£19.99



Occasionally, you will get a piece of DLC that fundamentally changes how you play a game, providing it

with a radically different spin. Then you get those pieces of DLC that essentially provide you with more of the same. *TESO's* largest piece of DLC so far, Orsinium, falls into the latter category, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

This add-on is aimed at the type of hardcore *Elder Scrolls* fans that will likely be after just that (and if you're still playing the game enough to be considering purchasing DLC, we're pretty confident you fall into that category). In fact, if you are a hardcore fan, you'll note that Orsinium, nestled in the Wrothgar Mountains, is the ancestral home of the Orcs and their former capital. It's not appeared in the series since *Daggerfall*, so being able to revisit it after such a long absence and to delve into the culture of Tamriel's Orcs is a pretty cool aspect of the game. As well as having a huge new area to play in, we also like the

fact that it changes over time - your efforts throughout the new story will have a visible impact on the city as the ruined capital is returned to its former glory.

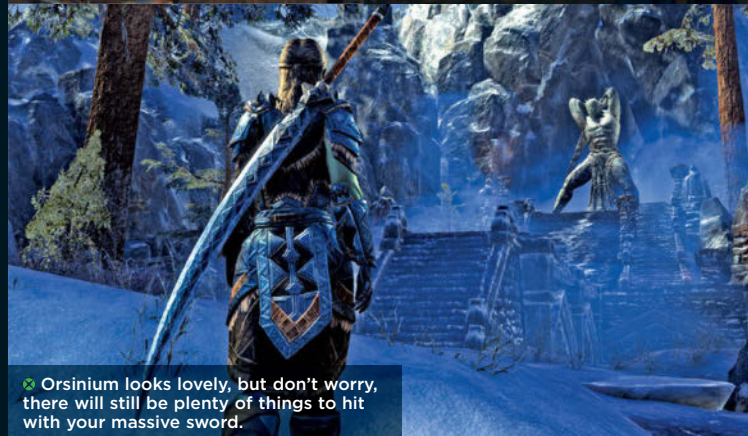
Even if you leave all the fan service aside, though, Orsinium is still a valuable addition to *TESO*. It boasts over 20 hours of story content and quests based around Orc monarch King Kurog's plan to unite the Orc clans and return Orsinium to its former glory. It also has a new solo challenge in the form of The Maelstrom Arena, two new public dungeons called Old Orsinium and Rkindaleft, new Orc inspired weapons and armour to discover, a new Ancient Orc crating style, and six new world group bosses to test your skill in battle. In other words, this is far more than a throwaway update, offering you seasoned *TESO* players out there a whole host of new content to get your teeth into.

VERDICT

It's unlikely to win any players who gave up on *TESO* back, but it's a solid and worthwhile pack for anyone still playing.



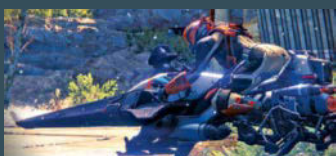
Of course there are robots in *The Elder Scrolls Online* - why wouldn't a fantasy game have robots?



Orsinium looks lovely, but don't worry, there will still be plenty of things to hit with your massive sword.

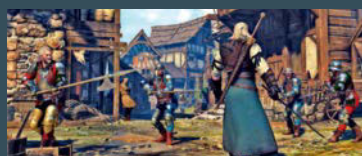


FOUR ALTERNATIVES TO THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE



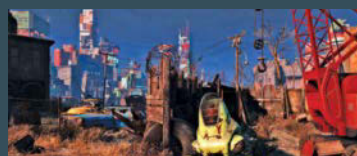
DESTINY

Was it the idea of taking on quests with friends and using your different abilities in concert that brought you to *TESO*? *Destiny* could be perfect for you.



THE WITCHER III

If fantasy is your thing and *TESO* didn't deliver, then might we suggest the excellent *The Witcher III*, one of the best games of the year?



FALLOUT 4

If you're drawn to *TESO*, we're guessing you like open world RPGs. If you're okay with moving from fantasy to sci-fi, what better option than *Fallout 4*?



BORDERLANDS 2

Finding loot, new weapons and armour, is a big part of MMOs like *The Elder Scrolls Online*. If that's what floats your boat, then give *Borderlands 2* a shot.



BATTLEFIELD 4: COMMUNITY OPERATIONS

Power to the people



Final Stand was *Battlefield 4*'s last piece of Premium DLC, but that name

has proven to be somewhat deceiving, because it seems that it is *Community Operations* that will actually be the game's swansong. And what better swansong than a free one? Giving away a free piece of DLC is a brilliant way of bringing the community back for one final foray into battle and, indeed, this is very much a community-focused update.

The whole concept behind *Community Operations* was that it was developed in conjunction with the community, based on their feedback, suggestions and votes in polls. The result is a lush jungle map with an infantry focus (though agile vehicles like the quad bike do play an important role). For *Battlefield* veterans, we don't think it'll stick



Explosions, vehicles, tactics and team work - *community operations* offers everything a *Battlefield* veteran needs.

out as the best piece of DLC - *Second Assault*'s reimagining of classic map Caspian Border, or *Naval Strike*'s introduction of the brilliant Carrier Assault, are far more likely to provide the moments that are remembered as highlights - but let's not forget that it is a free bit of DLC from a studio with a reputation

for making good DLC. If you're turning your nose up at that then we don't know what's wrong with you.

VERDICT

Battlefield 4 might be getting a little bit stale at this point, but *Community Operations* is free and who doesn't love free stuff?

FARMING SIMULATOR GOLD

The cows have come home



You might question why in the world anyone would want to buy DLC for a

farming game, but then you might question why anyone would make a simulation game about farming in the first place. Yet, here we are, in a world where *Farming Simulator 15* exists for Xbox One and has been pretty successful. It's in that context that developer Giants Software has released this Gold expansion.

The expansion includes one new Eastern European inspired map called Sosnovka - it's a nice enough looking area, but don't expect it to turn the game into some eye-popping graphical marvel. Outside of that, it adds a whole load of farming equipment that we've never heard of - including the Zetor Crystal 12045 tractor, the Rostselmash Arcos 595 Plus combine harvester and



the Argus 870 header. We're sure that's all thrilling stuff if you're *really* into farming, but as you can probably guess, we're not. We had our fun with *Farming Simulator*, but we never thought, "You know what this game is missing? The Kverneland Exakta EL 700." With that in mind, we'd find it very difficult to justify the £11.99

asking price for one new map and a bunch of new equipment to confuse ourselves with. Unless you are the most obsessive of farming fans, we suspect you'll agree.

VERDICT

A sentence we never thought we'd say: this is for hardcore farming fans only. Apparently there are a lot of you.

INDIE ROUND-UP

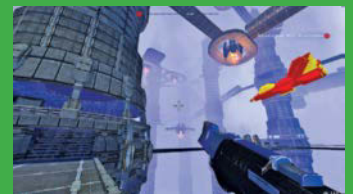
BACK TO THE FUTURE: THE GAME

To tie in with *Back To The Future*'s anniversary, Telltale has brought its own interpretation of the franchise to Xbox One. It's not the best, but anyone nostalgic for *BTF* will enjoy it.



BEDLAM

This game has a great concept - you play through the history of the FPS genre as a foul-mouthed Scottish woman who is trying to work out why she is suddenly trapped in a game. It's a shame the shooting is not as good as the idea.



LASERLIFE

This rather bizarre game sees you play through the memories of a dead astronaut discovered by some alien construct in the form of rhythm-action. It's a solid title, though we did find the electronic soundtrack to be a little bit lacking.



INSTANT INDIE COLLECTION: VOL 2

This collection includes procedurally-generated steampunk sneak-em-up *The Swindle*, turn-based 2D sci-fi roguelike *Nova-111* and *OlliOlli*-style BMX title *Pumped BMX+*.



RECOMMENDED

MUST-PLAY GAMES FROM THE XBOX CATALOGUE



10 ESSENTIAL ID@XBOX GAMES

INDIE GAMES HAVE TAKEN THE XBOX ONE BY STORM. HERE ARE 10 UNMISSABLE TITLES THAT YOU SHOULD DOWNLOAD TO YOUR CONSOLE RIGHT NOW



OCTODAD DADLIEST CATCH

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Young Horses Inc.
Release Date: 2015

It's when games like this come out that we offer our high praise to the gods of ID@Xbox, because it's so outrageously brilliant in idea and execution that it's hard to fault. You are a loving father and dedicated husband, who also just happens to secretly be an octopus. As you desperately try to keep your secret identity hidden from your family and friends, you must also keep Octodad's life in order. That means doing the family shop, taking the kids to the aquarium and clearing up the garden. The controls are unique, and the game is brilliantly self-aware.



VOLGARR THE VIKING

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Crazy Viking Studios
Release Date: 2014

Volgarr The Viking is hard. We're talking kick-you-in-the-balls-then-try-to-rip-them-off hard. The game makes *Dark Souls* with its tame save points and health potions feel like a cool glass of water on a hot day. In this analogy, *Volgarr The Viking* is a shot glass full of extra hot Nando's sauce. But you know what? That's kind of why we love it. The game feels like a classic 16-bit action adventure title, with all the skill, clever design and beautiful sprites we miss. Fancy torturing yourself? This is the game to choose.



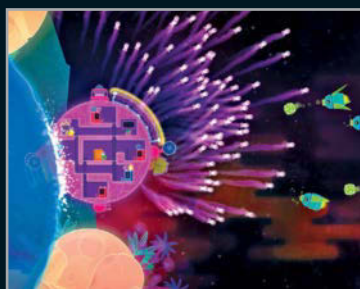
Highlight



SHOVEL KNIGHT

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Yacht Club Games
Release Date: 2015

Great 2D platformers are few and far between on Xbox One (a tip of the **X-ONE** hat to you, *Rayman Legends*, you beautiful game, you) but *Shovel Knight*, without a doubt, is up there with the best of them. The retro adventure wouldn't be out of place on a console from the Eighties, but the hardcore action and brilliant level design made this an instant classic. Without a doubt this is one of the best games on the Xbox One right now, which sounds like a big statement but it really just goes to show what ID@Xbox games can do, even when they're up against big, triple-A titles.



LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS SPACETIME

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Asteroid Base
Release Date: 2015

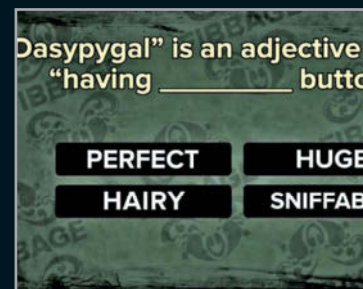
The cute design may make you think that this is an airy-fairy romp for one or two players. The truth is that, even on the standard difficulty level, the game is genuinely challenging – especially alone. This game is designed to be played with co-op, and with a real-world pal sitting by your side it quickly becomes more about communication than skill. The spaceship is cleverly designed, so you've got plenty of things to do, and the action definitely leans towards 'frantic' on the excitement scale.



GUACAMELEE!

Console: Xbox One
Developer: DrinkBox Studios
Release Date: 2014

You don't often get Mexican-themed titles on any console, so for *Guacamelee!* to hit Xbox One – and to be so damn fun – was quite surprising. The 2D side-scroller is part fighter, part platformer, and it does both things very well. The design is absolutely beautiful, too, with bright colours, lovely scenery and oodles of character. The Xbox One version was actually a port of the Xbox 360 version, but adds extra story levels, new locations to explore, and new abilities to use as you play. It won't last you all year, but for a brief, fun distraction this is well worth your time.



FIBBAGE

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Jackbox Games
Release Date: 2014

There are a couple of party games on this list, but none are as accessible as *Fibbage*, which allows you and your friends to use phones or tablets as controllers. You're all given a phrase on the TV screen that has a single word missing. Your job is to type in an answer on your smartphone or tablet – if you get it right, you'll get points. If you don't know it, you'll need to make up something clever, convincing... or just a bit rude. The more players you convince of the truth, the more points you get, and the results are often so face-achingly hilarious that you'll have to take a break to stop the pain.



#IDARB

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Other Ocean
Release Date: 2015

We'll never forget the moment we scored a last-second goal against our friend after a long and hard-fought match in *#IDARB*. We turned to him, his face just a few inches from ours, and roared right at him. In our minds we tensed our muscles and our shirt tore from our shoulders. We grew three feet. The controller in our hands shone like a mystical idol. In reality we'd just popped the ball into the scoring zone on this ridiculously fun 2D sports title, but that's the joy of *#IDARB*. The game is incredibly simple, but with weird rules, great physics and 8-player local play, this is essential for any party.



THE ESCAPISTS

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Mouldy Toof Studios
Release Date: 2015

Don't let the simple art style of this top-down escape-'em-up put you off – the title is fun, challenging, and gives you all kinds of creative options for your play. You're an inmate in prison and your task, as the title suggests, is to escape. There are dozens of ways to do it – will you dig a tunnel? Find a hidden exit? Steal a guard's uniform and walk out the front door? It's entirely up to you, and you'll have to adapt your chosen escape plan and make the most of opportunities that present themselves. It's a great example of unique gaming.



THE SWAPPER

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Facepalm Games
Release Date: 2015

This puzzle platformer is one of our favourite Xbox One titles – and we were really surprised by how much fun we had with it. When an astronaut crash lands on an alien planet, she finds a weapon that allows her to create clones of herself, and switch consciousness between these clones at any time. You must use this ability to solve puzzles and escape the planet. The premise is excellent, and the execution is even better, with a stunning art style bringing the alien planet to life. It's slow, brain-teasing, and will really grab your attention. Well worth a go.



LIMBO

Console: Xbox One
Developer: Playdead
Release Date: 2014

If you haven't heard of *Limbo* then you might be reading the wrong magazine, but even 18 months after it landed on Xbox One – and a full five years after its first release – there are still some people who haven't sampled its brilliance. It's incredibly atmospheric, with dark shadows chasing a small boy through a moody, scary world, and the game feels almost claustrophobic because of it. From the story of the boy who is looking for his sister to the physics-based puzzles that will test your skills as much as they test your brainpower, there's so much to love.



“Wake me
when you
need me...”



Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.xb1.co.uk
www.nowgamer.com
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor In Chief **Ryan King**
ryan.king@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586241

Deputy Editor **Stephen Ashby**
Senior Staff Writer **Josh West**
Production Editor **Rebecca Richards**
Senior Designer **Newton Ribeiro de Oliveira**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Photographer **James Sheppard**
Head Of Design **Ross Andrews**
Publishing Director **Aaron Asadi**

Contributors

Adam Barnes, Ian Dransfield, Ross Hamilton, Dom Peppiatt, Dominic Reseigh-Lincoln, John Robertson, Ed Smith, Paul Walker-Emig

Cover image

Rise Of The Tomb Raider © 2015 Square Enix. Deus Ex: Mankind Divided © 2015 Square Enix. Gears Of War 4 © 2015 Microsoft Corporation. Far Cry Primal © 2015 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved.

Advertising

Digital or printed media packs are available on request.

Head Of Sales **Hang Deretz**
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager **Anthony Godsell**
☎ 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International

X-ONE is available for licensing. Please contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

Head Of International Licensing **Cathy Blackman**
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions

subscriptions@imagine-publishing.co.uk

To order a subscription to X-ONE
☎ 0844 848 8409
☎ (Overseas) +44 (0) 1795 592 874
Email: XONEmag@servicehelpline.co.uk
13 issue subscription (UK) – £51.90
13 issue subscription (Europe) – £70
13 issue subscription (ROW) – £80

Circulation

Head Of Circulation **Darren Pearce**
☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director **Jane Hawkins**
☎ 01202 586200

Finance

Finance Director **Marco Peroni**

Founder

Group Managing Director **Damian Butt**

Printing & Distribution

Southernprint Ltd, 17-21 Factory Road, Upton Ind. Estate, Poole, Dorset, BH16 5SN
☎ 01202 628 300

Distributed in the UK, Eire & the Rest of the World by: Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU.
☎ 0203 787 9060
www.marketforce.co.uk

Distributed in Australia by: Network Services (a division of Bauer Media Group), Level 21 Civic Tower, 66-68 Goulburn Street, Sydney New South Wales 2000, Australia.
☎ +61 2 8667 5288

Disclaimer

The publisher cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material lost or damaged in the post. All text and layout is the copyright of Imagine Publishing Ltd. Nothing in this magazine may be reproduced in whole or part without the written permission of the publisher. All copyrights are recognised and used specifically for the purpose of criticism and review. Although the magazine has endeavoured to ensure all information is correct at time of print, prices and availability may change. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein. If you submit material to Imagine Publishing via post, email, social network or any other means, you automatically grant Imagine Publishing an irrevocable, perpetual, royalty-free license to use the materials across its entire portfolio, in print, online and digital, and to deliver the materials to existing and future clients, including but not limited to international licensees for reproduction in international, licensed editions of Imagine products. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Imagine Publishing nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for the loss or damage.

© Imagine Publishing Ltd 2015

ISSN 2053-1893



"I don't
want this
to end"

GAMESBEAT
(EPISODE FIVE)

"Just so
Game of
Thrones"

GAMESPOT
(EPISODE TWO)

"Powerful and
shocking"

IGN
(EPISODE ONE)

GAME OF THRONES™

A TELLTALE GAMES SERIES

◆ SEASON PASS DISC ◆

"Excellent"

BUZZFEED
(EPISODE ONE)

"An
absolutely
essential
experience"

THE NERDIST
(EPISODE FOUR)

"Tense &
brilliantly
paced"

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
(EPISODE THREE)



AVAILABLE AT
ASDA



HBO
HOME BOX OFFICE



XBOX 360 XBOX ONE



WORLD OF TANKS

OUT NOW ON XBOX ONE

DOWNLOAD NOW **AND** PLAY FOR FREE
WITH **XBOX LIVE GOLD**



EPIC 15 VS 15 TANK COMBAT - #1 FREE-TO-PLAY ON XBOX 360

THE FIRST-EVER CROSS-PLATFORM BATTLES
BETWEEN XBOX 360 AND XBOX ONE

WWW.WORLDOFTANKS.COM/XBOX



*XBOX LIVE GOLD MEMBERSHIP (SOLD SEPARATELY) REQUIRED. ADDITIONAL IN-GAME CONTENT AVAILABLE AND SOLD SEPARATELY. © 2015 WARGAMING.NET, PLC. WARGAMING.NET, WORLD OF TANKS AND THE WARGAMING LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS AND/OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF WARGAMING.NET, PLC. IN THE U.S.A. AND/OR FOREIGN COUNTRIES. XBOX AND THE XBOX LOGOS ARE TRADEMARKS OF THE MICROSOFT GROUP OF COMPANIES AND ARE USED UNDER LICENSE FROM MICROSOFT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.